

APRIL MOVEMENT AND EDITORIAL REPRESENTATION:  
A RHETORICAL READING OF *THE KATHMANDU POST*  
AND *THE HIMALAYAN TIMES*

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A THESIS

submitted to Kathmandu University in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

August 2015

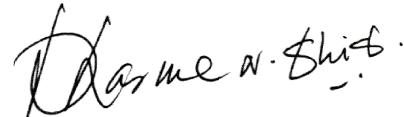
## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Mr. Hem Raj Kafle for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, presented in August 2015. Title: April Movement and Editorial Representation: A Rhetorical Reading of *The Kathmandu Post* and *The Himalayan Times*.

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The popular movement of April 2006 (April Movement) is a productive rhetorical exigency in Nepal in terms of the diversity of textual representations. Majority of the texts on the movement take note of the factual and historical dimensions such as the events preceding and during the mass uprising from 6 to 24 April. A number of them analyze the roots of the movement from both historical and sociological perspectives. Quite a few credit one or the other political actor for a resultant leadership, while other texts acknowledge the contribution of independent media as one of the influential factors for the success of the movement.

Only limited critical studies have been done on the discursive aspects of the movement's textual representations, and no extensive academic study of media texts from a rhetorical perspective attempted so far. The present work seeks to fulfill such dearth of scholarship by carrying out rhetorical criticism of the political editorials of *The Kathmandu Post* (TKP) and *The Himalayan Times* (THT), the two leading corporate newspapers in English published during the heightened political happenings of 2005 and 2006. Taking account of the political events between 23 November 2005 and 30 May 2006 (191 days), which is the period involving the pre-movement,

movement and post-movement phases, the study applies Fantasy Theme Criticism as the principal rhetorical perspective to read altogether 214 editorials and their corresponding exigencies. In this process, the study explicates several milestones of the April Movement including substantive discussions on the actors, actions, settings, guiding factors, popular metaphors, main achievements, representative visions and rhetorical communities sharing these visions.

This study identifies and analyzes eight representative narratives about the April Movement, each including a character type embodying an important movement actor. The actors are the Seven-Parties Alliance, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), the royal regime, the security forces, the judiciary, Nepali people, the media and the international community. Each actor is seen to represent a set of rhetorical visions shared by related discourse communities and sanctioned by contextual and universal legitimizing principles. The study then explicates the April Movement in the rhetorical phases of resurgence, revitalization and restructuring. The study further helps clarify the application of some of the major theoretical constructs of Fantasy Theme Criticism and Symbolic Convergence Theory.

The study's major inferences relate to the role of the two newspapers, which signified their persistent presence and scrutiny during the political transitions of 2005 and 2006. The eight narratives, eight sets of rhetorical visions and three phases of movement underline this aspect of the papers' contribution in representing Nepal's history. Also, the main rhetorical dimension of the newspapers involves their advocacy of freedom of expression and the duty to disseminate truth. Likewise, the papers take a position characterized as objectivity with clear sense of involvement and open admonition for the main political parties to undergo change and redemption. Broadly, *TKP* and *THT* show deep belief in democracy, rule of law and freedom of expression, and lend clear discourse support to the adherents of pluralism, good governance and peaceful living. They seek to establish a trust on popular sovereignty and internal consolidation, and voice resistance to any kind of external interferences. They have a concern for promoting national ethos, which would ensure self-respect through economic uplift, national unity and political convergence and, therefore, enhance patriotism, sovereignty and good governance in Nepal. Thus, with their sustained emphasis on the inevitability of peaceful transition from autocracy and heightened armed insurgency to democracy and conflict settlement, the papers defined their rhetorical position as activist change agents.

PhD in English

The Thesis of *Mr. Hem Raj Kafle* presented on August 11, 2015

Title: April Movement and Editorial Representation: A Rhetorical Reading of  
*The Kathmandu Post* and *The Himalayan Times*

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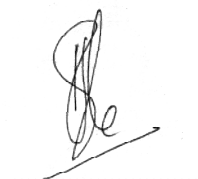
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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Thesis has not been submitted for the candidature for any other degree.

I understand that my Thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Kathmandu University Library. My signature below authorizes the release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Hem Raj Kafle', written over a dotted line.

Hem Raj Kafle

August 11, 2015

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I grew up in a society where a Masters degree was considered the biggest, and highest, level of formal education one could achieve in life. PhD was an outlandish dream to me and my people. It felt big as soon as I joined KU in August 2000 and was warned that life in a University should culminate in doctorate and professorship. This particular feeling made me respect my work and the challenges I was asked to face as a KU faculty.

My beliefs about academic pursuits have changed ever since I decided to venture into doctoral research, probably quite late. I have realized that a journey in serious scholarship must begin after ruthless submission of adult arrogance to childish ignorance. The last five years, therefore, have not been without moments of alternation between breaking off and picking up spirit to learn and work. I acknowledge this opportunity of growth, the productive challenge my University pointed at – the necessity of constant update in knowledge, qualification and competence. This study forms a major part of that challenge.

People say quite often that PhD takes 99 percent perspiration and very little inspiration. But, to me, it is as much inspiration as perspiration – perhaps fifty-fifty. The five-year involvement has not only been an opportunity to hone my research skills, explore new knowledge in rhetoric and create a lasting network of intellectuals and well-wishers, but also an occasion to test my academic stamina and perseverance. I am deeply obliged to a large number of research scholars, friends, colleagues and kinsmen. I owe some of them a special mention here.

Foremost, I extend heartfelt gratitude to my Supervisors, Prof. Dr. Meenakshi Raman and Dr. Dharma Adhikari, for bestowing on me as much personal guardianship as professional guidance from the scratch to the accomplishment of this thesis. I will remain indebted to their scholarly grooming during the toughest times of my research journey. Prof. Raman is a great professor and a highly inspiring mentor and guardian. I thank her for facilitating my stays in her campus and for the seminars she organized with her colleagues at the Department of Humanities and Management. She heads a spirited group of young academics like Dr. Mitra, Dr. Geetha, Dr. Alex and Dr. Datta, who are ever ready to inspire high-level professional commitment to knowledge and research. I will remember their friendly inputs and emotional support during my presentations in February and July in 2013.

Dr. Adhikari is as prominent a mentor as an inspiring friend. I have spent some very productive times in his company. Working with him in a number of assignments apart from this thesis was an important opportunity for orientation towards the degree of rigor genuine works in journalism and research would require. Especially during the two consecutive editions of Media Gufa, I witnessed his dedication to work, in the way he would spend sleepless times in order to ensure quality in his writing projects. Most noteworthy of all, he never allowed me to feel hopeless amid pressing personal, familial and official responsibilities. His company also brought me into the network of dedicated young journalists and editors like Rajneesh, Keshab, Arun and Guna Raj. They are great as friends and as the source of inspiration to continue hard work.

I got constant motivation from a few scholars from the field of rhetoric and communication. I particularly acknowledge the support of Dr. Sonja K. Foss, Professor of Communication at University of Colorado Denver, USA. She responded my request and went through the research proposal. It was she who recommended Fantasy Theme Criticism as a most relevant rhetorical perspective to study editorials on a political movement. She also mailed a number of seminal readings on rhetoric, Symbolic Convergence Theory and Fantasy Theme Criticism. Her own book, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, has been for me as seminal a handbook of rhetorical scholarship and critical approaches to communication as an embodiment of her sisterly guidance. I am equally thankful to my friend Tika, who has all these years mediated between recent rhetorical scholarship in the USA and what I have pursued in Nepal's socio-political and academic milieu. More than anything, his trust on our friendship and on my passion for learning gives me impetus to emulate my endeavors. I equally want to thank Dr. Ishwary Pandey, my former guru and MA-thesis supervisor, for his substantive insights on my research proposal. He, as others, is a source of endorsement that my work has been placed in right context and perspective.

A number of people from the English studies community have graced me with regular encouragement. I extend reverence to Prof. Shreedhar Lohani, Prof. Padma Devkota, Prof. Abhi Subedi, Prof. Ammaraj Joshi, Prof. Arun Gupto and Prof. Ananda Sharma for their affection and inputs all these years. Likewise, any word of thankfulness would weigh less than the constant pokes and praises of Bal Krishna, Keshab, Prakash, Balu and Sarita, my best companions in the community of young

literary enthusiasts. With equal credence, I would like to remember the helps and best wishes from at least three well-known media professionals – Mr. Ajay Bhadra Khanal, Mr. Raghu Mainali and Mr. Kunda Dixit – all of whom rescued me while I was facing dearth of contemporary texts. Mr. Khanal provided me the digital copies of *THT* editorials, Mr. Mainali his publications on media situation during the royal rule, and Mr. Dixit the archive of reports on press freedom situation in Nepal.

I have deep respect for my seniors in KU without whose simultaneous motivation and challenge I would probably not even think of doctoral studies. My heartfelt gratitude to Prof. Suresh Raj Sharma, founder VC, Prof. Bhadraman Tuladhar, former Dean and Registrar, and Prof. Pushpa Raj Adhikary, former Dean and Controller of Examinations. The University's incumbent office bearers deserve as much thanks as respect for their constant encouragement and guidance for excellence. I owe much to the trust of Prof. Ram Kantha Makaju Shrestha, VC, Prof. Bhola Thapa, Registrar, and Prof. Panna Thapa, Controller of Examinations. I will cherish the encouragements and warnings of Prof. Subodh Sharma, former Director and senior colleague in the Student Welfare office, and Prof. Mahesh Banskota, Dean of School of Arts, and the genuine concerns shown for my academic growth by Mr. Mukunda Upadhyaya, Prof. Sanjay Khanal, Prof. Ramesh Mashkey, Prof. Bim Shrestha, Prof. Deepak Subedi and Dr. Sagar Sharma.

With much honor I preserve the friendship, cooperation and guardianship of Prof. Jangab Chauhan, former Head of the Department of Languages and Mass Communication. I am equally grateful to Khagendra, Eak, Punya, Bibhu, Prabal, and Mr. Arun Sharma, my colleagues at the Humanities and Management Unit. Friends, I will treasure for life your collegiality, concern and cooperation. I salute the company of Ekku Madam and remember her sisterly care from as early as the days of hard work at the Department of English. I would also like to keep in mind the productive times spent with Ram Chandra, Kashiraj and Nirmala Mani, the colleagues from my former workstation. I love Uddhab and his infinite cordiality and friendship, and the ease in which he explains the complexities of contemporary Nepal. And my everyday pals in KU main campus and beyond: Bivek, Hari, Rabindra, Prachanda, Dhurva, Mahendra, Dev Raj, Megh Raj and a bunch of others.

I thank Lopita Nath for the two books on rhetorical criticism she sent from the USA. I hardly ever had to feel cut off from the resources people of my generation were using in the western academia. I also acknowledge my former student Kishor

Rimal who incurred scanned copies of *TKP* and *THT* editorials from Press Council Nepal. And I love to remember all my former students, especially Rubeena, Shekhar, Asmita, Sunir, Riju and Sahina, who showed interest in rhetoric, trusted my mentorship and carried out final year projects with diligence and integrity. In fact, though pretty young for certain intricacies of rhetorical scholarship, they helped sustain my own passion for rhetoric and discourse studies.

“When are you going to become a *doctor*?” This alarmingly pleasing question came very often from some of my old friends and close relatives. I can’t help thanking Durga, Prem (Adhikari) and Prem (Luitel), my all-time buddies, for their repeated warning that I had a PhD writing at hand. I would mostly credit Dr. Bal Chandra Luitel, my uncle and senior colleague, for making me realize the worth of rigor in research and for insistently reminding me that I had got the potential. I believe, in his company even the dullest of research aspirants wake up to think and write. Also, at this point I want to register warm greetings to Mr. Prem Subedi, my teacher and idol for patience and moderation, whose occasional queries about my progress have boosted my confidence to thrive in the academia.

Outlandish it might sound, but I truly wish to meet and take tea with three writers whose works taught me the value of formality, beauty of sentences and audacity for stylistic independence. I will treasure Patrick Dunleavy and *Authoring PhD*, Roy Peter Clark and *Writing Tools* and Helen Sword and *Stylish Academic Writing*. They have whetted my belief that no matter from where and about what you write, writing is a conscious and empathetic performance to make readers realize a sense of value and an emotional change, and to give them an urge for a physical act.

Dad, Mom, Sister and Brothers, I dedicate this achievement to you for your unflinching trust and emotional backing all these years since I left home to build my own little world. Apsara, Anurag and Hridaya, my darlings, you forbore my absence and silences, presence and furies, and all the gloom that my confusions brought home. Thank you for coming around with smiles of faith that no matter in what mood, I was the most consistent better-half and dad. No wonder, now, that I come to the point of confession: I did it for you!

Hem Raj Kafle  
Dhulikhel

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## ACRONYMS

ANTUF	All Nepal Trade Union Federation
APF	Armed Police Force
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CA	Constituent Assembly
CIAA	Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority
COAS	Chief of the Army Staff
CoC	Codes of Conduct
CPN-M/ Maoists	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
CPN-UML	Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist)
EU	European Union
FNJ	Federation of Nepalese Journalists
FTC	Fantasy Theme Criticism
ICG	International Crisis Group
KU	Kathmandu University
MSU	Mahendra Sanskrit University
NBA	Nepal Bar Association
NC	Nepali Congress
NC-D	Nepali Congress (Democratic)
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NSP	Nepal Sadbhavana Party
RCCC	Royal Commission for Corruption Control
RNA	Royal Nepalese Army
RPP	Rashtriya Prajatantra Party
SC	Supreme Court
SCT	Symbolic Convergence Theory

SPA	Seven-Parties Alliance
TADO	Terrorist and Disruptive Ordinance
THT	The Himalayan Times
TKP	The Kathmandu Post
TPA	Twelve-Point Agreement
TU	Tribhuvan University
UK	United Kingdom
UML	Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist)
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
USA	United States of America

## CHAPTER I

### Discourse Context

*Our life begins to end the day we become silent about things that matter.*  
- Martin Luther King

The mass uprising during 6 to 24 April 2006, popularly known as *Jana Andolan II* or second people's movement (hereafter referred to as April Movement), marks a turning point in the history of Nepal. The country saw a series of political developments following the uprising. Some of these included declaration of Nepal as a secular state (May 2006), signing of the 25-Point Ceasefire Code of Conduct (May 2006), Comprehensive Peace Accord between the democratic government and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (November 2006), election to the constituent assembly (April 2008) and, above all, declaration of the country republic and abolition of monarchy (May 2008). The mass movement that initiated the end of monarchical rule lent currency to the concept of 'new Nepal' suggesting the country's progression towards a new political-historical phase.

The movement had its ground in the November 2005 Twelve-Point Agreement (TPA) between the Seven-Parties Alliance (SPA) and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M). The agreement that came as an offshoot of the military coup staged by king Gyanendra on 1 February 2005, voiced a collective resolution to conduct peaceful demonstrations against the autocratic monarchy. It also envisioned success in the movement leading to the formation of an all-party government that would hold constituent assembly (CA) elections on a later date and complete the process of mainstreaming the CPN-M. A second-round understanding between the SPA and the CPN-M in March forged mass protests during 6-24 April 2006, which forced the king to reinstate the House of Representatives (HoR) dissolved in May 2002.

The mass movement unquestionably prepared the groundwork to end the ten-year long Maoist armed conflict. It brought the CPN-M to the political forefront and sidelined the palace from it. Monarchy, as a result, went out of the political scene in due course of time. Such peaceful withdrawal by a long-rooted institution of monarchy is something of an unprecedented incident in the world history. The pro-republic observers consider the exit of monarchy the outright defeat of the king. The pro-palace critics contend that it was as much the result of the heightened republican

pressure as that of the king's readiness to quit without pushing for a potentially bloodier confrontation. Such conflicting observations naturally register a rhetorical character to the movement.

One discursive aspect of the April Movement is that critiques on its backdrop and culmination deny credit to a single actor or political force. The issue of who contributed to the movement's success has gained recurrence and prominence in Nepal's mainstream political discourses. There are claims that independent and corporate media played a prominent role. But such claims form a subject of in-depth inquiry focusing mainly on their editorial priorities. If Nepalese corporate media had a role in sidelining the monarchy and reinstating the parliament through the historic protests, how did they represent the general visions of movement and change, to which the principal movement actors could converge? How were the visions reflected in the editorial discourses of representative mainstream newspapers? This study aims to answer these questions by analyzing the editorials of two mainstream newspaper outlets published from Nepal.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explain, through a rhetorical study, how the mainstream corporate newspapers represented the visions of movement and change in Nepal through their editorials on political exigencies preceding, during and following the April Movement. With its main communicative aspect involving the period from 22 November 2005 to 31 May 2006 (191 days), the study samples editorials of two English dailies operational during this period, *The Kathmandu Post (TKP)* and *The Himalayan Times (THT)*, as the main rhetorical artifacts for analysis. The specific rhetorical method applied in the study of editorials is Fantasy Theme Criticism, a form of rhetorical criticism widely considered relevant to the study of rhetorical artifacts covering an extended duration and multiple exigencies.

The selected artifacts include only the editorials of political subjects between the TPA (22 November 2005) and the end of May 2006 following the 25-Point Ceasefire Code of Conduct (25 May 2006). I have selected *TKP* and *THT* in view of the fact that the question of their role in the movement is intriguing. While Kantipur Publications (along with its constituent outlets including *TKP*) is acclaimed for being actively involved in the movement, hardly anything has been said of the nature of *THT*'s involvement. But didn't they converge in responding to the political

developments of the time, in construction and sustainment of the rhetoric of movement and change despite their separate corporate identities yet identical editorial priorities? Moreover, I aim to study the discourse of the April Movement represented by the corporate English dailies as I believe that these newspapers' educated and international readership should provide the study a broader critical scope.

Both *TKP* and *THT*, for their claim of standard, can be assumed to follow the general traditions of presenting editorials in all respects of content, function and structure. For example, *TKP*, the sister outlet of Kantipur Publications Pvt. Ltd, which declares itself to be "pioneer private media of Nepal," shares Kantipur's commitment of becoming "the market leader" with "added responsibility to affirm professionalism in disseminating true information" (Kantipur Publications, "About Us"). Similarly, *THT* has an official statement to have grown "to become Nepal's largest selling English daily" or the "numero uno [No. 1] English daily in Nepal." In fact, *THT* claims to have earned recognition for "quality, innovation and integrity" with a privilege of having "strong brand recognition among readers as well as advertisers" (*THT*, "About Us"). Thus, what is really curious is that both papers assert to (have) become forerunners in terms of standard and representation. *TKP*'s adherence for being a pioneer and market leader with a daily circulation figure of 50000 copies appears to place itself in clear market competition with *THT*, which has an official declaration of being the largest selling, number one daily in Nepal.

What is apparent about the two papers is the quantitative aspect. While *TKP* writes one editorial daily except on Sundays in topics of immediate socio-political significance, *THT* writes two editorials each day except on Saturdays and Sundays. *THT*'s lead editorial addresses issues of socio-political currency, whereas the second mostly excludes political subjects for social issues. Both *TKP* editorial and *THT*'s lead editorial contain three paragraphs. *THT*'s second editorial is only two paragraphs. The qualitative aspects such as their discourse priorities, stylistic milestones, and overall rhetorical features demand an in-depth study, but there have been no such attempts so far. Hence, the present work is an initiative to this direction, particularly with focus to the messages and general rhetorical features. The study, however, does not seek to make any comparative analysis of the two papers. The emphasis is not on where they diverge and dissent, but where and how they converge to present a common voice of reality.

## Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine how *TKP* and *THT* editorialized the issues concerning the April Movement. The specific objective is to discover the nature of the rhetoric of April Movement represented in the editorial artifacts. The application of Fantasy Theme Criticism in the selected editorials helps delineate three concrete goals to meet the above objectives:

1. Explicate the major political exigencies, rhetorical stances and historical narratives as represented in the editorials of *TKP* and *THT* during the 191 days of political transition;
2. Analyze the rhetorical visions shared by the two dailies in view of how these visions and inherent narratives define the rhetoric of April Movement;
3. Infer the broader role of corporate media in the April Movement based on the rhetorical stances, historical narratives and rhetorical visions represented in the editorials of *TKP* and *THT*.

## Research Questions

As stated above, the main purpose of the thesis is to study how the two corporate newspapers, *TKP* and *THT*, represented the April Movement in their editorials during the historical time marked by the two major political breakthroughs in 2005 and 2006 – within the period of 191 days (six months) from the TPA to the end of May 2006 following the signing of 25-point code of conduct. The study therefore addresses the following representative question.

- How did *The Kathmandu Post* and *The Himalayan Times* represent the rhetoric of movement and change in Nepal through their political editorials for the period between the Twelve-Point Agreement and the end of May 2006?

The following questions substantiate the main question:

1. What political exigencies and general historical realities did *TKP* and *THT* editorialize during the 191 days of transition?
2. What representative historical narratives build up through the editorial commentaries of the 191 days?
3. What shared visions about movement and political transformation chained out in the editorial representations of the two national dailies, and how do these representations define the nature of the 2006 Movement?

4. What do the rhetorical representations by *TKP* and *THT* editorials suggest about the broader role of corporate media in the April Movement?

### **The Rhetorical Perspective**

This study applies Fantasy Theme Criticism (FTC) to analyze the selected editorials. FTC is a method of rhetorical criticism based in Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT), a theory of communication developed by American rhetorician Ernest Bormann in 1972<sup>1</sup>. Bormann calls FTC “a humanistically based study of rhetorical history and criticism and interpretative approaches to the study of interpersonal, small group, organizational, and media communication” (“Rhetorical vision” 722). The method is “SCT’s research base” and explores “a theoretical explanation of how multiple rhetors use their conscious imaginations to create symbolic realities (rhetorical visions)” (Bormann, Cragan and Shields “Defending” 369). Simply put, it is a method of searching the evidences of symbolic convergence, of looking at the pattern of the construction of rhetoric, such as finding the “parameters and a rhetorical structure for the phrase ‘the rhetoric of’” with the primary research focus on the message in artifacts (Cragan 69). FTC adheres that meanings, emotions and motives for action are manifest in the messages communicated and that public discourses represent individuals’ or groups’ or organizations’ attempts to influence actions through construction of meanings. Media artifacts, for their inevitable public circulation, can be the manifestations of such attempts.

FTC’s major premise is that communication helps construct a sense of community through sharing of a rhetorical vision, a symbolic reality which underlies the convergence of a cumulative number of people who identify with the reality and participate in transferring it further. The theory is named symbolic because it deals with language and fantasies (narratives), and convergence refers to the sharing of common beliefs and opinions. Symbolic convergence is essentially grounded in realities, which is to say, people’s sharing of common meanings or their identification with a point of consensus, is possible only due to their connection with real occurrences. According to this theory, rhetoric functions as the representation of collective consciousness grounded in reality. Thus, rhetoric lies in artifacts that both contain the evidences of symbolic convergence in connection with social and historical realities and with inherent ‘meanings, emotions and motives for action’ bear

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<sup>1</sup> Detail of SCT and FTC in Chapter III



the potential for becoming external triggers for further generation of the sense of collectivity.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study attempts to discover elements of broader academic, social and cultural significance in otherwise short-lived, taken-for-granted texts like newspaper editorials. This is to say, the study treats newspaper archives as major sources of contextual and political discourse. It examines the role of newspaper editorials as an important media for representing collective visions, popular beliefs and historical orientations apart from their everyday role of constructing certain ideological perspectives on a familiar issue or event. In other words, the study also brings to light the nature of mainstream media's involvement during the historical changes of April 2006.

The study expands the application of rhetorical study, in general, and of Fantasy Theme Criticism and Symbolic Convergence Theory, in particular, to Nepal's typical historical context covering the crucial phases of political transitions in 2005 and 2006. It unravels the major movement actors in diverse semantic facets, the events in terms of the intensity or shallowness of their impact in political transformation and the settings of political/historical occurrences in their physical, ideological and temporal dimensions. Likewise, the study takes account of the contextual and universal factors that lent broad impetus to the April Movement, in addition to depicting the representative visions, rhetorical communities and popular metaphors that sustained the discourse of the April Movement.

The advantage of this venture, and its major contribution, therefore, lies in the reconstruction of editorial artifacts into a representative treatise of rhetorical discourse for the readers of contemporary Nepalese history and political changes. Needless to say, this study opens for future researchers a number of avenues for rhetorical scholarship, some of which can involve extension of discussions on the role and contribution of lowly represented change partners such as the judiciary, international community, alternative media, and professional organizations.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study follows the pattern of organization prevalent in the works of rhetorical criticism. Especially, it goes in line with the suggestions of Jim A. Kuypers in *Rhetorical Criticism, Perspectives in Action* and Sonja K. Foss in *Rhetorical*

*Criticism: Exploration and Practice.* The common suggestion includes the aspects of contextualization, description, interpretation, analysis, implications to scholarship and conclusion.

The following chapter draws references from majority of available writings on political developments in Nepal, and on April Movement and the role of media during the movement. It also includes the basic conceptualizations on rhetorical criticism and editorial studies. Chapter III discusses Symbolic Convergence Theory and Fantasy Theme Criticism, and outlines the rhetorical method used in this study. Chapter IV details the editorial coverage by *TKP* and *THT* taking note of the main exigencies and editorial critiques in the selected artifacts, and uncovers the main chronology of events represented by both newspapers. Chapter V presents the representative narratives and underlying fantasy themes and symbolic cues. Chapter VI discusses the main rhetorical visions and explicates a broader picture of April Movement in its principal rhetorical phases. Chapter VII concludes the study with notes on the main inferences, implications and further avenues of scholarship.

## CHAPTER II

### Relevant Discourses

*For me every ruler is alien that defies public opinion.*

- Mahatma Gandhi

#### **The Context of April Movement**

The Nepalese people remember at least three major popular uprisings in the last six decades. The first is the 1950 insurrection that abolished Rana oligarchy; second, the 1990 movement that toppled the monarch-led Panchayat; and third, the 2006 mass revolution that pushed monarchy out of the mainstream. Majority of the active population today know of the 1950s through school textbooks and narratives of their elders. Many saw the end of the Panchayat regime and were active in the ensuing multiparty era. Most participated in the 2006 uprising and have very fresh memories of the happenings surrounding the constituent assembly election (April 2008) and its aftermath.

All these events mark a gradual awakening and advancement of the Nepalese people towards the value of freedom, education, egalitarianism, ideological openness, and global exposure. The change of 1950 lent the first experience of pluralism after the 104 years long political restrictions under the autocratic Rana regime. The 1990s showed the rise of people's participation in social development amid the growth in education, communication, media and information technology, in addition to that of political contest first within parliamentary framework and then despite the turmoil of war between national security forces and the CPN-M. The 2006 movement lent the active population a sense of closeness and ownership to the country's changes. The movement has carved a path for swift transitions in the political mainstream, and to the grassroots it has spread a sensibility about the need for a cultural and political resurrection.

The more than six decades' period in Nepal following the first democratic movement is also marked by constant attempts to define who should rule and with what identity for the ruled. The attempts are rooted in a constant polarization and tension between political powers. Monarchy has featured the most in this atmosphere while one or other political party remained in the opposition. For example, the 1950 resurgence against the dynastic rule of the Ranas culminated in the aggrandizement of

the Shahs, the only other prominent dynasty in Nepal in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The major political force of the time, NC, helped reposition the Shahs after their century-long subjection to non-significance under the Ranas. The time the anti-Rana upsurge began, it appeared that monarchy was sharing the similar fate of relegation as people, and the then monarch Tribhuvan presented himself in opposition to the ways of Rana rulers. But the king ascended the giving end while people remained clamoring for complete democracy, for writing a new constitution through the election of constituent assembly.

The period of one decade (1951-1960) before the monarchy took over to introduce Panchayat rule lent people an environment to experience political pluralism and freedom of expression. However, king Mahendra, son of king Tribhuvan, dismissed the prospects of a constituent assembly and dictated the promulgation of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal (1959). The Constitution established the supremacy of a Shah king as the Head of State, claimed all credits and authority for Nepal's socio-political transformations both for the past and future. Its preamble, for instance, declared king Tribhuvan to have "led a Great revolution for the rights and welfare of His subject" and "earned immortal fame in the history of the world" having been "firmly resolved to establish real democracy in Nepal by giving fundamental rights to the people." The preamble further noted the monarch's aim to "cement the unity of the nation by bringing about political stability through the establishment of an efficient monarchical form of government responsive to the wishes of the people" (Nepal Law Commission 1). Nepal's first ever general election was held for 109 constituencies under the same Constitution in 1959. NC won with vast majority and formed a government. This development appeared to herald the era of Nepal's first formal democratic governance under an elected prime minister.

King Mahendra dismantled the elected government and banned political activities in 1960 in order to introduce the Panchayat system. The three decades of Panchayat mark an era of 'indigenous style' state building sans political dissent, of buttressing Nepalese nationhood by adherence to the norms of Hindu kingdom as defined in the Panchayat Constitution. Political activities, however, flourished underground and in exile with significant upsurge of communism throughout the country. This developed with such degree that political opposition forced the monarch to conduct referendum and work out systemic reformation in the early 1980s. Later,

two anti-Panchayat forces – the communists and the NC – jointly toppled the three-decade long autocratic system in April 1990.

The end of Panchayat meant the monarchy's admission to partake in a new order, under the provision for a constitutional monarch. The new Constitution promulgated in November 1990 limited scopes of the king. So far as the king respected his symbolic role, adhered to the affairs of the parliament and refrained from interfering in the regular political undertakings, the arrangement of constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy presented itself as an appropriate government system for Nepal. The governments following the 1990 change were expected to bring swift socio-economic reforms in the country. But the national concentration went into experimenting the newly experienced political freedom in the post-Panchayat period. The system retained its unitary nature as the monarchy and the political parties remained functionally attuned under the Constitution.

The post-Panchayat time mainly witnessed the organization of ordinary people in political parties, which augmented a new political culture in the grassroots. Even the Panchayat stalwarts found space in the multi-party system either by forming new groups or by entering the old political parties. As early as 1990s Nepal saw democratization of one faction of communism when the then leading Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) renamed itself as CPN-UML and went for a reformist structure adhering to people's multiparty democracy as a guiding principle for a competitive political presence under a traditional parliamentary structure. Other communist factions 'experimented' the multi-party system by taking part in the parliamentary elections under the 1990 Constitution, and entering the HoR albeit in minority. The general election of 1991 placed NC in the majority with the major leftist forces in opposition.

The democratic era was marked by a heightened privatization drive in industries and other sectors of the state. Capitalism flourished and inspired micro initiatives in the local levels. There was progress in education, communication and information technology. Foreign employment lent international exposure to semi-skilled youths resulting in gradual growth of remittance to propel the country's ailing economy. Educational migration placed Nepalis in the world's best academic systems signaling the prospect of siphoning back more skilled and trained human resources. However, it was at this same time that Nepal began to face armed insurgency amid occasional splits within leading parliamentary parties, and the cut-throat competition

between the anti-Panchayat allies of 1990, especially the NC and CPN-UML. A radical faction of communists broke away from the parliamentary structure in 1996 to wage People's War from the rural areas under CPN-M, disgruntled by the non-reciprocation of the then government<sup>1</sup>.

In the post-1996 scenario, Nepalese politics took a bipolar turn. The People's War enforced obvious ideological rifts to the country's grassroots. Democratic exercise went beyond organizing regular party meetings and occasional inter-party clashes while rifles and bombs crept into the countryside. Political contest took place between the armed and unarmed cadres of the CPN-M and other parliamentary parties. When the government decided to eliminate the Maoist insurgents through security operations, the bipolar politics took a bloodier shape which drew national attention and drained large chunk of resources. Instability hit the country's economic activities.

None of the governments formed after 1990 could enjoy full terms; seeking a new coalition as soon as one came to power became a culture in the mainstream, a characteristic of Nepal's democratic polity from as early as the 1950s. The early 2000s further saw the gradual evaporation of Nepal's traditional ethos. The first blotch came with the elimination of the legitimate royal lineage in the Narayanhiti massacre in June 2001. The second, again, was the failure of an elected government to complete a term owing to intra-party feud in NC. Just about that time monarchy, with newly ascended king Gyanendra, decided to intervene in the political affairs. The king dismissed an elected prime minister in October 2002 and started a direct rule sidelining political parties as well as suspending the HoR. The king's move brought parliamentary system to a halt, which brewed stark confrontation between monarchy and multiparty democracy.

Thus, the cause of the 2006 movement may be considered to have begun in June 2001 with the elimination of the traditional royal lineage in the Narayanhiti massacre. The carnage ended the rule by a person who actually complied with as well as owned the 1990 Constitution that assigned people's representatives the power of governance. But king Gyanendra within no time made his plan of activism loud and clear declaring that he would no longer remain a patient and silent monarch. His intent to remain constructive monarch met with the first success in June 2002, when the then prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba recommended dissolution of the HoR for

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<sup>1</sup>The 40-point charter of demands of Babu Ram Bhattarai's party and Deuba Government's disregard.

a fresh election. Some critics, such as Gopal Shubhechhu, remember it as a first move towards regression. Few others hold Deuba responsible for lending regression a channel. The legislative vacuum between the parliament dissolution and the would-be election allowed the king enough time to finalize his roadmap of activism.

Subsequently, in October 2002 the king pulled Deuba out of premiership in the charge of incompetency and took over the executive power. Though the royal move was partly taken to have given Nepali people “a chance to breathe a sigh of relief and to be optimistic about things to unfold” (Navin Mishra 41), it was by no means a welcome development to Nepal’s nascent parliamentary democracy. Political parties opposed this resurgence of kingship. The country’s political scenario changed from a seemingly bipolar (establishment vs. Maoist rebels) conflict situation to an apparently triangular (monarchy vs. parliamentary forces vs. CPN-M) confusion.

The king’s October move invited a highly dialectical situation. The king found ways to bring division within and among parliamentary parties by offer of share in his ‘regressive’ programs. And, he equally played upon the mood of political mainstream by appointing and sacking prime ministers at his will. He also emphasized that his move involved a goal to institutionalize democracy through political stability and end of armed conflict. Three successive governments acted upon unsuccessful peace talks with the CPN-M. The aftermath of each talk brought more military clashes and uncertainty. Leaders of parliamentary parties organized sporadic protests in Kathmandu demanding reactivation of the HoR but with no effect to the monarch-led government. Democracy remained suspended, in monarchy’s custody, to be defined and distributed at the monarch’s will and convenience to hire and fire ministers.

This suspended situation lasted till 1 February 2005 when king Gyanendra staged a coup and declared the end of all erstwhile parliamentary provisions. He formed a council of ministers in his chairmanship and brought in the forefront the Panchayat-era stalwarts like Tulsi Giri and Kirtinidhi Bishta as his vice chairs. The government thus formed suppressed political activities, and made censorship attacks on the independent media. It formed Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC) in order to investigate and penalize the cases of corruption during the multiparty era. RCCC rather became a pretext to harass the erstwhile politicians including such prominent Nepali Congress (Democratic) (NC-D) leaders as Sher Bahadur Deuba and Prakash Man Singh. The royal government used its anti-Maoist military operation as propaganda for legitimacy. The political dimension of the state-

Maoist conflict got shadowed by the king's logic of fighting terrorism. With suppression of mainstream political parties, the country witnessed the revival of the Panchayat-made ideologues in the state's mainstream.

The monarch-led regime ushered its three-year roadmap of stabilizing democracy and establishing lasting peace. It projected local and parliamentary elections as the main agenda. Militarization was further intensified. Dissenting voices remained subdued except that a group of professionals, media persons and human rights activists dismissed the royal takeover as outright violation of people's sovereignty. The civil society, thus formed, emerged as a meaningful force and was pivotal in bringing commonsense and courage in the political parties (Pahadi 10). In May 2005, seven parliamentary parties formed an alliance to confront the autocratic regime. This turned out to be a first decisive convergence of pro-democratic forces after the king had begun his active rule. This created an apparent tri-polar conflict structure for some time. The Seven-Parties Alliance (SPA)<sup>1</sup> also began immediate overtures to the CPN-M about forging an agreement to fight the king's rule. The latter reciprocated with a three-month ceasefire in September 2005. The SPA passed a resolution for constituent assembly, a building block for further coalition with the CPN-M. The intensive talks between the SPA and the CPN-M culminated in the TPA signed on 22 November 2005. The agreement contained promise of the parties and the CPN-M to amend their past mistakes, to jointly conduct a peaceful movement against the regime towards establishing complete democracy through the election of constituent assembly.

A cursory look at the text of the TPA shows it to be highly programmatic with at least six fundamental components<sup>2</sup> of denoting a foreboding for confrontation. In the first place, it explained the ideological grounds for ushering the movement. These were the urgency of "establishing peace by resolving the 10-year old armed conflict through a forward-looking political outlet" and the "inevitable need to solve the problems related to class, caste, gender, region etc." Second, the agreement identified the parties' actual enemy, the autocratic monarchy. It took the monarchy as "the main hurdle" in realizing "democracy, peace, prosperity, social advancement and a free and

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<sup>1</sup> The SPA comprised Nepali Congress, Nepali Congress (Democratic), Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi Faction), Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist), United People's Front, Nepal Peasants' and Workers' Party, and United Leftist Front

<sup>2</sup> The version of the Agreement used here is taken from "Nepal's New Alliance: The Mainstream Parties and the Maoists," International Crisis Group, Asia Report N°106 – 28 November 2005.



sovereign Nepal.” Third, it presented the signatories’ self-criticism which implied their pledge for redemption from earlier discrediting actions. The CPN-M promised “self-criticism and self-evaluation of past mistakes” and “expressed commitment not to repeat such mistakes in future.” Similarly, the seven political parties committed themselves to “self-evaluation” and vowed “not to repeat the mistakes of the past which were committed while in parliament and in government.”

Fourth, the agreement denounced the programs of the king’s “illegitimate” rule, mainly the election to parliament, as “a crafty ploy” and pledged to “actively boycott them. The parties also called upon the general public to “make such elections a failure.” The fifth component in the agreement, the most important one, was the set of parties’ own programs. Their key agenda was a broader goal of “bringing autocratic monarchy to an end and establishing absolute democracy.” This act would demand “creating a nationwide storm of democratic protests,” for which the parties would “appeal to the international powers and the people to support,” and invite the “civil society, professional organizations, various wings of parties, people of all communities and regions, press and intellectuals to actively participate in the peaceful movement.” The final component of the agreement was the promise to monitor the future courses of action. The parties would seek the supervision of the United Nations or any other reliable international body to conduct the elections of constituent assembly in a “free and fair manner.” They would also “settle any problem emerging between the parties through peaceful dialogue at the concerned level or at the leadership level.”

Thus, the crucial period of 191 days, on which this study is based, began on 22 November 2005. The convergence between the parliamentary parties and the insurgent Maoists again transformed the situation from “triangular conflict to a bipolar one” (Birendra Mishra 60). But the regime remained unresponsive about the need of peace talks with both the parliamentary parties and CPN-M. Neither did it take heed of the Maoists’ unilateral ceasefire. The regime insisted on holding the municipal elections in February 2006 as a part of the king’s three-year roadmap. But the roadmap saw a first organized rejection and defeat, with the mainstream parties boycotting the polls amid Maoist blockade on the day of voting, which resulted in extremely poor voter turn-out. The election fiasco sufficed for a doubt that the regime would ever be able to push for the parliamentary election, which it had planned to

conduct the following year, without involvement of the country's mainstream political forces.

The royal government did not publicly accept the failure of the polls, but with seeming complacency declared that the polls were great success. The regime's claim of its success against the parties' outright rejection and resultant low voter turnout took a highly dialectical form. The parties had little or nothing to do to prove their victory, since it was apparent; the government had little or nothing to do to prove itself victorious, since defeat was apparent. It was also not the first setback to the regime's ambitions, however. Earlier the Supreme Court had passed two significant decisions towards invalidating the royal moves. The first involved a stay order against banning of newscasts in FM stations (November 2005), and the second the scrapping of RCCC in February 2006.

In March 2006, the SPA and CPN-M forged a second agreement towards reinvigoration of the November TPA. The SPA announced a four-day strike from 6 to 9 April. The Maoists agreed to lend peaceful support to the SPA movement. This was to be the first joint peaceful confrontation with the regime. The four-day of strike in April saw unprecedented participation of people throughout the country. The government turned repressive and violent; it accelerated the arrests of party leaders, imposed curfews in the major cities and intervened the protest rallies brutally. At least 3 protestors got killed during the four days itself. But the participation increased each day, and turned into what Kanth calls a "massive popular uprising against the King" which literally "was largely unanticipated" (67). Encouraged by this initial mass support, the SPA decided to continue protests till full democracy was achieved.

The protest lasted for nineteen days, and the mass of people overwhelmed the regime's repressive strategies. On April 21, the king made an attempt to lure the SPA leaders with an offer of premiership. Amid the pressure of the mass, and despite the admonition of diplomatic circles to accept the royal bait, the leaders rejected the offer with a pledge to continue the protest till the restoration of democracy. When the pressure of protests mounted and the advice of international community did nothing in recourse, the king met the SPA's demand by restoring the HoR, which had been dissolved in May 2005. Thus, the main phase of confrontation ended. In the nineteen days' agitation 19 lost their lives, above 5000 got severe injuries and 9 disappeared. The results, however, were "quite revealing," according to a columnist, in that "the death of 19 persons during the street demonstrations brought about a change that the

killing of nearly 15,000 in the course of 11-year insurgency could not” (Aditya M. Shrestha 6).

A new government headed by NC president Girija Prasad Koirala following the restoration of the House took the charge of completing the peace process promised in the TPA. To this effect, and amid skepticism and constant pressure from the Maoists whose main agenda ever had been to go for all-party government, constituent assembly and declaration of republic, the government worked swift plans within one and half months following. The first such step was the April 28 House resolution on constituent assembly and the second the House declaration on May 18. The reinstated House announced itself the sole sovereign body to work out future policies, curtailed the privileges bestowed by the 1990 Constitution upon the king and the royal palace, abolished His Majesty’s government formally for Government of Nepal and proclaimed Nepal a secular state, among others. The government, at the same time, formed a team to hold talks with the CPN-M. The first peace talks passed a 25-point ceasefire code of conduct between the government and the CPN-M, the first stepping stone in the peace process. The crucial six months ended marking a new phase of transition ahead.

Series of important events followed the peace talks between the SPA-led government and the CPN-M. The CPN-M joined the parliament and a coalition government after signing a Comprehensive Peace Accord in November 2006. The House, now with the representatives from CPN-M, passed the Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) which paved way for the election of a 601 member CA. The CPN-M’s People’s Liberation Army went into camps and their weapons into cantonments under the surveillance of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN). Consequently, elections to CA took place on 10 April 2008, after a couple of date postponements. The CPN-M ascended the CA as a party with majority securing 38% of the total votes. The first meeting of the CA in May 2008 declared Nepal a republic; the Narayanhiti Royal Palace turned into a museum. Nepal got its first elected president as the Head of state. The CA elected CPN-M chairman Prachanda the country’s prime minister, a historic case to have in premiership a person who had led an armed insurgency for ten years.

What gives an aspect of rhetoricity to this historical context is the prevalent question of establishing a new republican order, more or less in line with the Maoists’ goal for people’s republic. This step involved a move out of the chaos caused by a

long-drawn tension between democracy, autocracy and radical communist insurgency. The move then led to the urgency to uproot at least one power-center, the autocratic fold represented by the monarchy. Uprooting autocracy included a number of exigencies marked by unprecedented conversion of major political actors. Foremost, as underlined in the TPA, it was the shift of Maoist agenda from effacement of feudal system by force of armed insurrection to by participation in democratic movement hand in hand with the parliamentary parties. In this sense, the April Movement can be remembered for a historical case in which an armed communist force melted into an unarmed mass of protestors at the call of a pro-democratic front represented by the SPA. Another exigency adding to the Movement's rhetoricity involves the seven parties' readiness to do away with the 1990 Constitution and constitutional monarchy in a two-fold mission of abolishing autocracy and mainstreaming armed insurgents, which later resulted in their circumstantial move from the margin of the streets to helm of power.

However, the main rhetorical exigency involved broad historical commonsense of erstwhile political competitors and enemies in the NC, the UML and the CPN-M to forge alliance against the autocratic monarchy despite visible scuffles among themselves suggesting potential breach of alliance and relapse of conflict. Such alliance was formed at a time when monarchy had made a last-ditch effort to resurrect and following its unprecedented or, perhaps, premature fall both to its own short-sightedness and the force of movement. Finally, the movement's rhetoricity involved the case of monarchy's bloodless exit, first from active politics and later from the system itself.

This study seeks to analyze the movement's rhetoricity in editorial representations preceding, during and following the 19 days of April 2006. This is to attest to the postulation that the editorial texts reflect realities as well as shape people's perceptions on the realities. The main critical task here involves close reading of newspaper editorials, which are appropriate for being the texts of mass circulation and of immediate link to actualities. The reading calls for such rhetorical perspective that would minutely examine the role of political actors and their individual and collective actions, relevance of ideological and geographical locales, legitimization of action by guiding principles and communicative value of popular metaphors in constructing and sustaining visions of reality. It is here Fantasy Theme Criticism (FTC) bears relevance as the principal rhetorical method.

## Representations and Critiques

The April Movement has elicited diverse types of representations apart from immediate media coverage in news stories, editorial commentaries and opinion pieces. Majority of the available texts range, in degree of criticality, from event-based reports, diaries and first-person observations to interviews and research-based articles. *Jana Andolan II: A Witness Account* (2006) by Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC) is probably the earliest book-length coverage of the principal events of the movement. It records major happenings of each of the nineteen days along with collection of the main news stories by [inseconline.org](http://inseconline.org), INSEC's official online portal, with a tinge of pro-movement perspective. Besides, the book archives a number of documents that represent international community's concerns over Nepal's crisis during the historic nineteen days. Likewise, Ghanendra KC's *Jana Andolan II Ra Jana Ghoshanaharu* (People's Movement-II and People's Proclamations, 2007) collects important documents including the main agreements preceding and following the movement, and resolutions of the main political parties and the reinstated House. The book also lists principal events of the nineteen days through a relatively neutral perspective.

Two personal diaries present a descriptive record of the happenings of the April protests. The first, *Unnais Din* (Nineteen Days, 2006) by Bishnu Nisthuri, the then president of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ), is a highly informative documentation of nationwide events during the nineteen days. Presented in the form of an observer's diary for the major happenings of Kathmandu's mainstream, this book also evidences the author's hard work in keeping track of the events from all over Nepal including the stories of the involvement of various independent media houses and journalists. Another diary, Madhusudan Pandeya's *Tee Abhutpurva Unnais Din* (Those Unprecedented Nineteen Days, 2007), provides a subjective account of the events of nineteen days, in which the author presents himself as one of the protestors. Pandeya looks at the nineteen days with apparent acerbity for the royal regime and highly critical perspective on the security forces and the government. Almost like the books of Nisthuri and Pandeya, Shree Prasad Ghimire's *Ganatantra Agiko Mahabharat* (The Mahabharat Preceding the Republic, 2008), also records the occurrences of the nineteen days. The book presents diary-like fragments of descriptions and stories on political events surrounding the April protests. More than as accounts from direct participation in the movement, Ghimire admits to have

gathered evidences from newspapers published during the eventful months following the February 2006 takeover.

Other works observe the contexts and incidences of the April Movement with apparent claims of objectivity and concern for truth. These include Prakash A. Raj's *The Dancing Democracy: The Power of the Third Eye* (2006), Gopal Shuvechchhu's *Yasari Aayo Nepalma Ganatantra* (Thus Emerged Nepal As a Republic, 2009), Gyan Mani Nepal's *Ganatantradekhi Loktantrik Ganatantrasamma* (From Republic to People's Republic, 2009), Khagendra Nath Sharma's *Ganatantra Ko Athak Yatra* (Tireless Journey to Republic, 2011) and Arvind Rimal's *Nepal Tharkaidine Tee Unnais Din* (Nineteen Days that Shook Nepal, 2011). While works of Raj and Nepal maintain neutrality in assessing the courses of events surrounding the April Movement, those of Shuvechchhu, Sharma and Rimal present critical viewpoints about the rise, acts and failures of the royal regime and the monarch. They build up an impression that anti-monarchy upsurge was the prominent reality of the time, and monarchy the principal blotch to the country's overall socio-economic progress.

At least four contemporary books are noted for their apparent political leaning. Indira Aryal's *Raja Gyanendra Ra Nepalko Rajniti* (King Gyanendra and Nepali Politics, 2010) is a distinct pro-royalist treatise on the genesis of king Gyanendra's historical entry and exit from the ruling mainstream. Aryal's book basically eulogizes the former king's life and activities in the context of the turbulent years in Nepal's history following the royal massacre of 2001. Typically, Aryal considers the end of monarchy in Nepal as the making of the monarch's pious intentions not to remain so adamant as to cause greater political chaos and bloodshed by sticking to the helm of power. In apparent contrast with Aryal's eulogy is Suba Sen's *Brain Bomb: Raja Gyanendrako Mahabharat* (Brain Bomb: The Mahabharat of King Gyanendra, 2007). With a tinge of sympathy and credence for Maoist presence in the movement, Sen portrays monarchy as the main cause of misfortune in Nepal and the monarch so undeserving as to assume a ceremonious role of proclaiming a change of system on 24 April 2006. Likewise, Pushpa Prasad Luintel's *Nepali Jana Andolan: Chha Dashak* (Six Decades of People's Movement in Nepal, 2010) and Deepak Sapkota's *Ten Years of Upheaval: Reportage of the Decade Long Maoist People's War in Nepal* (2010) exhibit obvious ownership to the claim of Maoists' prominence in the movement's initiation and culmination. Both consider the reinstatement of the HoR an untimely demise of the otherwise soon-to-be-resultant movement led by the Maoists.

Texts by authors with non-partisan fame who actively participated in the pro-democratic movement deserve equal attention. The books *Nagarik Andolan ra Ganatantrik Chetana* (Civic Movement and Republican Consciousness, 2007) and *Nikashko Nayan Margachitra* (New Roadmap for Outlet, 2010) present firsthand narratives and commentaries on the pro-democratic movement by two renowned civil society activists, Devendra Raj Pandey and Krishna Pahadi, respectively. Both authors highlight the role of civil society in shaping and enforcing the republican agenda in the 2006 movement even ahead of the political parties. The books lend adequate insight about the context where the parliamentary parties had taken time and needed stimulus to decide on organizing a resultant movement against the regressive regime.

There has been limited literary representation on the events of the movement. Nepal Prakash Adhikari's novella *Ganatantrako Garjan* (The Voice of Republic, 2007) narrates the April Movement through a first-person account of a young female protagonist from Kathmandu who has been stuck in Pokhara during the eventful nineteen days. The book is one among the rare literary works that seek to build up a complete picture of the pro-democratic movement in a setting away from Kathmandu's mainstream. Presented as a commoner's eyewitness account, Adhikari's fiction successfully recaptures the experiences and sufferings of the ordinary people of Pokhara during the days of violent clashes between agitated protestors and aggressive security forces.

Apart from some of the aforesaid book-length representations published within a few years following the historic event, there is extensive coverage of the movement exigencies by different media outlets. Newspaper editorials, opinion articles, news stories and features count among some of the easily accessible texts in archive. These texts form a substantive corpus for analysis of how the rhetoric of movement was constructed, disseminated and sustained or dismissed during the crucial phase of six months following the signing of the TPA in November 2005. The present study has its focus in the rhetorical analysis of newspaper editorials for the same logic that editorials have immediate discursive connection with exigencies.

There is equally good number of scholarly works on different facets of April Movement. Noted among the critical texts include the papers of Chaitanya Mishra, Bandita Sijapati, Uddhab Pyakurel, Saubhagya Shah, and Krishna Hachhethu. These researchers provide scholarly insights on the context, people's involvement and

consequences of the mass movement through broad historical, political and sociological perspectives. But their analytical focuses differ. Mishra aims to construct a comprehensive framework for studying the April Movement, and proposes to trace the roots in people's participation from as early as the political resurgences preceding and following the anti-Rana struggle of 1950s. Sijapati uses "literature on social movements, peace building and conflict transformation" to explain how "engaged citizenry and communities at the local level can have an impact on the resolution and transformation of violent conflict at the national level" (3). Likewise, while Pyakurel analyzes the principal visions of the movement and how the visions were brought into practice in the movement's aftermath, Shah examines the role of civil society during the movement in "effecting regime change in a weak state setting like Nepal" (1). Hachhethu and his team present an in-depth qualitative study on the question of Nepali people's awareness of politics and democracy in the transitional times between 2004 and 2007.

One book-length study on the issue of state failure in Nepal by Ali Riaz and Shuvo Basu reflects an objective outsider perspective on the popular uprising of 2006. The authors claim to "situate the events in historical context and provide background for a better understanding of the present and future of this nation . . ." (3). Another outsider observation of the movement is also provided by the reports of International Crisis Group (ICG). Two of its Asia briefings reveal different aspects of the nineteen-day protests. The first, published on 19 April 2006, discusses the role and influence of international community during Nepal's crisis. The second briefing of 10 May 2006 presents a detailed account of the nineteen days with focus on the nature of participation by different political actors, the civil society, the media, the international community and, above all, the general people.

The representations of the movement fall in both generic and predicative categories. In the generic category are such writings that simply avoid giving credit to any political actor but describe the movement in different signifiers. Comments in this line include such epithets for the movement as "one of the most peaceful and colossal uprisings in modern history" (*TKP*, "Ceasefire!"), and a "formidable show of a true people's movement" (Reecha Upadhyay, "A People's Movement in Nepal"). In a similar vein, we see a trend of ascribing the movement prominence in connection with national pride and the size (almost five million) and variety of the population that participated in the protests (Shyam Shrestha 4).



Comments in the generic category also underlie the arguments that the movement was incomplete and not as edifying as generally perceived. Sen says that the movement's end was to the immediate benefit of the monarch, though literally it meant victory of the protestors, since a "decisive war" was averted (Sen 154). Shyam Shrestha relegates it as an "early and immature compromise" which "saved the military-backed monarchy from falling into a dustbin of history" (4). A more radical perspective puts that "the developing situation" after the end of protests, "went against the Maoist strategy for turning the movement into a form of armed insurrection" (Sapkota 236). The nineteen days had only set a scene, and more had to come forward.

Another broad observation notes the main cause of the movement and its end. Kanak Dixit remarks that the movement was rooted in the demand for democracy and peace but not in republicanism; it was in favor of peace against autocratic monarchy amid the people's war and state violence (48). Riaz and Basu describe the success of the movement as "a victory of hope over despair" (101). Sijapati contends that the movement "does point to the power and strength of a primarily non-violent popular uprising to establish democracy and create an atmosphere for peace" (43). Hachhethu, Kumar and Subedi help summarize the general discourse on the movement with a few assertions. According to them, the movement was an unprecedented event since it was not confined to people's involvement in rallies only but that of urban elites whose presence was "obviously deeper and more extensive" (20). Broad expectations of peace and reconciliation were the principal motivation behind the people's participation and the movement's success. Other motivations for participation included the increase in people's exposure to mass media, political awareness and increase in their adherence and commitment to democracy. Amid this potential for a pro-democratic upsurge the SPA and CPN-M had acted as catalysts (20-37).

Discourses in the predicative category seek to explain two main aspects: the roots of the movement and credits for participation and success. The first elucidates the historical, sociological foundations of the mass uprising. In this line Chaitanya Mishra postulates at least five complementary factors to have led to the uprising and change of April 2006. These include:

- (a) the weakening and demise of pre-capitalist including feudal, political, economic, and cultural forms at multiple levels of social

organization, (b) the expansion and intensification of capitalism, (c) democratization based on successively enlarged, intensified, and relatively successful popular movements, (d) individualization, capability enhancement, and empowerment and (e) a crystallization of the constitutive themes of these multi-level historical-structural processes in the recent royal coup, popular resistance, and the consequent collaboration among the SPA, CPN-M and civil society actors. (13)

Mishra's inferences point to a fact that the April Movement was a culmination of a long historical process marked by the gradual weakening of old feudalistic order at the wake of modern education, political awareness and successes of earlier movements. Riaz and Basu underline three contemporary factors believed to have triggered the popular uprising: "the miscalculation of the palace, the successful organization of the mainstream political parties in conjunction with the Maoists, and the spontaneity of common people" (165). Pyakurel complements this view explaining the basis of people's spontaneity in participation. He notes two reasons why people joined the movement. First, it was their "hope for peace, democracy and prosperity in the country" as a result of the TPA. Second, it was a "popular discontent caused by the failure of the king's direct or indirect rules" (222). Thus, whether for its weakening, miscalculation and failure in governance or for its aggressive posture against democratic forces, the royal regime was particularly responsible for causing the 2006 upheavals thereby causing its own end.

The second main aspect of the predicative discourses explains the credit for the success of the movement. It ascribes the credit of success to one or other agencies and actors. Pandey contends that the change was rooted in two principal factors: the Maoists' realization of the impossibility of transformation through violent people's war and civil society's initiation for anti-establishment mobility (229). Gyan Mani Nepal echoes Pandey's claim that the changes were possible because the general mass, which rose fearlessly against the government, was confirmed of the Maoists' commitment to peaceful movement after they had declared ceasefire and joined hands with the SPA (90). Shuvechchhu explains that it was as much the common people's desire for change as the strength of the collaboration between parliamentary parties and the insurgent Maoists that helped in the movement's success (ii).

But Luintel gives the Maoists larger share of credits. He argues that before CPN-M promised to lend support, the SPA agitation was totally ineffective, limited to only a few streets of Kathmandu, and that it got momentum only because of the Maoists (159). Shailendra Kumar Upadhyaya also credits the Maoists for both the insurgency and subsequent participation in the movement. He acknowledges their role in “a mass awakening of vital issues” which had been suppressed before, which included “empowerment of women, emancipation of dalits and the recognition of the rights of ethnic groups.” In totality, it was the “emergence of the needs and aspirations of the marginalized people” which “received popular attention and approval” and thus became a “most pertinent” factor for the movement (6). Similarly, ICG’s comprehensive report on the April protests helps attest to the credits for the Maoists, which purports that the Maoists were instrumental in the movement’s success in such aspects as organizing blockades to support the shutdown, exerting military pressure around the country, carrying out political mobilization in Kathmandu, and creating a rural uprising, among others (“From People Power to Peace,” 3). Riaz and Basu present a relatively broader view by arguing that the movement “was a vindication of the political strength of the opposition parties, including the Maoists, and the people’s willingness to give the political parties an opportunity” (171).

No less emphatic is the credit given to the civil society. Sijapati explains,

... the active participation of respected civil society members in the movement was also one of the major factors that led to its success. Since most of the political leaders involved in the movement were of questionable reputation, the active engagement of well-known civil society members, including leading human rights activists, peace activists, academics and journalists, was essential in providing legitimacy to the movement. Because of the level of respect they commanded, they were easily able to mobilize the masses. (37)

Pahadi endorses this fact with a claim that the civil society had emerged as a torchbearer with their anti-regression programs immediately after the royal takeover in February 2005, with such effect as to fill zeal in people and political parties against the royal government. It was when political parties were hesitating to bring any new programs and the mainstream media chose to maintain silence under the government’s censorship (15-16). This could be a timely intervention of the civil

society as what Saubhagya Shah calls “a major conceptual category for political mobilization against the regime” (24). The same is echoed by Sharma, who says the civil society emerged when the king had lost his path, and through constant activism made the presence of citizens influential during the movement (67).

The international community as well gets share of credits for the movement’s success. In Pahadi’s view, Nepali leaders would have been rotting somewhere now if the international community had not helped or shown genuine concern about Nepal’s crisis (16). Though such opinion might sound overtly generalized and would belittle the then political leadership, no less could be said about the influence of foreign actors. Sijapati contends that the movement “probably would not have received the legitimacy that it did without the international spotlight.” But it did simply because the movement was rooted in the “agreement that was signed between the highly discredited political party leaders [the SPA leaders] and a political outfit [the CPN-M] that was ‘outlawed’ and even labeled ‘terrorist’” (36). The nature of influence, however, was more of a moral support in Nepal’s search for peace and democracy at large. During the movement, the international actors were rather in need to “translate that support into practical, coordinated and complementary efforts to deliver a viable peace process” (ICG, “Nepal’s Crisis,” 2).

Some critics suggest that the movement was successful not necessarily because of the influence of an identifiable leadership such as political parties or civil society. For example, Rimal regards it a “rebellion led by ‘unidentified’ youths.” He argues that it was due to the “unprecedented sacrifice shown by the youth force in the struggle for the restoration of democracy” that led to the change in April 2006 [my translation] (20). Sharma admits that in reality there was no need of a leader in the streets since people had become leaders themselves (69). Sijapati opines that “the nature of *Jana Andolan II* and the mass support it received is indicative of the fact that it was not one leader or one event that led to the success of the movement (37). This is to say, the programs of political parties, support by the Maoists, and the presence of civil society had only functioned as a catalyst. This is also to endorse the movement as having a “true representative character” for it “encouraged even the ordinary villagers and suppressed sections of society” including “women, ethnic groups, dalits, laborers, peasants” who “joined in the movement making it a movement of the people at large” (Baral 6). The participation in general was spontaneous, and common Nepalis, therefore, deserve the principal share of credits.

ICG's post-April briefing explains people's prominence beyond the broad aspect of victory over autocracy. The victory, in fact, was four-fold. It was foremost the victory over the king in that the "mass defiance of curfews to march against monarchy," especially in the later phase of the nineteen days, were decisive and "left the king with no option but surrender." The victory was over the political parties, especially against their "perceived willingness to do a deal with the king against the country's best interests." It was also over the Maoists in that "people did not rally under the Maoist flag" and "did not heed calls for a revolutionary insurrection" but instead "sent a strong signal that people power is a constraint on the actions of the rebels." Finally, it was over the international community because people "brushed off" their admonitions "when they appeared to press for an unpopular solution to end the crisis" when the pro-republican agenda had gained decisive shape ("People Power to Peace" i).

#### *Critiques on Media Activism*

Critics and writers predicate the role of media as an important participant and catalyst to the April Movement. Available discussions are limited to making passing comments about media's role. These limited critiques consider the independent media as one of the principal forces behind the success of the movement. For instance, immediately after the fall of the royal regime in April 2006, *TKP* wrote, "It is an undeniable fact that the independent media played a significant role in making the 2006 democracy movement popular and successful" ("Govt and Media"). Perhaps this was one of the earliest claims from the media sector about its contribution to the people's movement. Yuva Raj Ghimire's view endorses *TKP*'s claim. He clarifies that Nepali media, "except those in the state sector," opposed the regime "which meant they were strongly in favor of the political parties agitating for the restoration of democracy" (133). Also, a good number of other observations emphasize media's involvement in the change of 2006. Rajendra Dahal writes in the preface to the *31<sup>st</sup> Annual Report of the Press Council Nepal*:

For Nepali press, the year 2006 has been a landmark period to be recorded side by side with the country's socio-political history. . . . With its meaningful and leading role during the movement, Nepali press acquired new strength, and became as influential and decisive as other organs of the state [My translation].

Glorifying the contribution of the press, Nishthuri puts, “As obvious as the sun, Nepali press contributed its best to bringing the *Jana Andolan* to its height” (14). An assessment of Nepali media by International Federation of Journalists mentions, “The historic breakthrough of 2006 that lays the ground for the restoration of press freedom in Nepal was achieved by the consistent struggle by pro-democracy activists, with journalists at the helm” (18). Such placing of journalists “at the helm” is reflected in majority of writings about media’s role in the movement. Manjushree Thapa recalls the activism of journalists even before the movement started: “The journalists have been just as dedicated. . . . They have also continued to report, fearlessly, on the wrongdoings of the King’s regime” (107). About the journalists’ involvement during the movement, Dharmendra Jha asserts, “Most of the journalists of the country, under the leadership of Federation of Nepalese Journalists were in the movement against the King’s autocratic direct rule” (8). Similarly, Shreedhar Gautam acclaims media workers for playing “a marvelous role by portraying the imminent fall of totalitarian regime” (4).

However, limited discussion has taken place regarding the rhetorical nature of media messages during the movement. What Shah postulates about media’s critical role might only suffice to reflect their rhetorical stances. According to him, most of the private media including newspapers, radio stations, and television channels “had adopted a highly critical stance toward the royal government, and their combined effort was able to sway public opinion in favor of regime change” (viii). The rhetorical aspect also involved the “ideological stance and representational slant” with which the media could “intimidate the government and paralyze its power, including the security forces” while “validating the opposition’s campaign.” In addition, the rhetorical role included the “intense and adverse glare of both local and foreign media on the security forces” since their repressive acts were “instantly brought to global scrutiny and opprobrium by live television images, the internet, radio and newspapers”( 16). The effect of such representation was that the government and security forces were “demoralized and incapacitated” while the demonstrators vindicated in their defiance of repression.

Kunda Dixit holds similar view about the way the independent media helped in the April Movement. He highlights the power of the editorial content of radios and newspapers during the movement. Radios and newspapers, which he calls “activist media,” had played a major role in “keeping the public informed about the

demonstrations” (13). Their activism was mainly reflected in the stories that gave a “wide play to the leaders of the democratic movement,” which also conveyed to the general public that everyone including the journalists was fighting for fundamental freedoms. This is to say, the media had penetrated the general mass with a highly positive picture of political mobilization, which resulted in the increase in mass participation. This view is complemented by Deepak Aryal’s observation of different alternative media forms like blogs and SMSs alongside the mainstream outlets, which counts among the limited studies on media messages circulated during the movement. Aryal, based on the nature of their message which largely persuaded people to join the pro-democratic movement, asserts that the media had been pivotal to “reshaping the nation’s vision for transformation” (17).

Apart from the aforesaid generalizations on the broad role of media and journalists during the nineteen days, there have been no scholarly studies on the movement-time media messages, Binaya Kumar Kasaju remarks that few studies have focused only on how media portrayed the role of women, ethnic communities, *dalits* (the untouchables) and the *Madhesis* in some movements of Nepal (3), but that most discussions resemble the general statements about journalists’ contributions. The present study can, therefore, fulfill this dearth of scholarship by presenting a rhetorical study of editorial representations for the political exigencies surrounding the historic mass movement.

### **Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism**

Rhetoric usually poses a challenge of definition. Its almost saturated use in everyday parlance as a referent to bombasts, lies, and inflated speeches makes it as commonplace as any other ordinary word. But its aesthetic, discursive and academic aspects are diverse and ever-expansive. Rhetoric is believed to have come to practice as an art form from as early as the fifth century BC. It was developed by exploiting the fundamental human faculty of using communication skills to make things happen. In ancient Syracuse rhetoric was taught to farmers especially those who were conditioned to prove their claim over a controversial land (Karen Foss 854). In other words, it was a civilized means of avoiding violent conflicts that would ensue from bilateral claims over confiscated property (Lamb 108). The sophists of Greece taught rhetoric and earned fame as professional educators. But they were criticized, particularly by Plato, as the promoters of falsehood and trickery. Plato insisted that

rhetoric “should be reserved for the intellectual elite since this ability was too powerful for ordinary people” (Renegar and Malkowski 49). He openly castigated the sophists for cheapening rhetoric through popular use.

Aristotle, reportedly the first Greek scholar to organize a treatise on rhetorical artistry (*The Rhetoric*, circa 335 BC), introduced rhetoric as a systematic form of public communication. He promoted rhetoric as an important component of democracy, a way of formally empowering people. His idea of rhetoric involving the ability to find “available means of persuasion” (36), therefore, is the earliest simplification of rhetoric as an instrument for effective communication. Persuasion, despite its negative potential for being mere verbal maneuvering, was a process for winning positive causes by establishing a sense of value both in the speakers and in their audiences.

In later days, the scope of rhetoric involved human communication beyond persuasion. Cicero (106-43 BC), the popularly known Roman orator, advocated its use “as a means of serving people.” A century later, Quintilian (35-96 AD), who was “Rome’s greatest teacher and codifier of rhetorical knowledge,” extended its use for informing, motivating and inspiring. In the fourth century, St. Augustine (354-430), who was responsible for the “early Christian uses of rhetoric,” introduced mandatory teaching of rhetoric to all those who desired to remain pious and protected from evils. He reasoned that “since the devil had full access to all of the available resources of rhetoric, others ought to study it if only for their own protection.” Thus, rhetoric was perceived to transcend moments of public oratory to wider goals of communication and education. Particularly, the Greco-Roman world “established a tradition of discourse that has been taught throughout Western history and continues to grow and to develop down to our own time” (Kuypers and King 2).

As a verbal art, in its strictly classical sense, rhetoric is understood in its formal dimensions: the five canons and three genres. The canons include invention, disposition (arrangement), style, memory, and delivery. These refer to the fundamental process for the creation and presentation of a discourse. Invention signifies discovery and choice of materials, both experiential (ethical, emotional) and external (textual, logical, factual) deemed requisite by the rhetor to create influence on the audience. Disposition is organization of the materials in such a way that suits the nature of influence the rhetor aims to exert in the audience. It has to do with carefully foregrounding and backgrounding of ideas by way of their placements in the text.



Style comprises the stock of lexical, syntactic, phonological, and performative structures a rhetor is able to maneuver in an attempt to ensure aesthetic fervor in the artifact. Memory and delivery concern mental and verbal exactness of an orator during a live oral presentation. These canons, nevertheless, are equally contributory to the process of performing invention, disposition and style. All the canons collectively constitute a formal set of methodological categories for the neo-Aristotelian rhetorical analysis.

The three genres of rhetoric – epideictic, deliberative, forensic – organize all kinds of formal artifacts into three basic types of discourse. The genres denote three situations and places where rhetoric takes effect. Epideictic rhetoric reflects ceremonial occasions and is, therefore, placed in a consciously designed space such as a US President elect's acceptance speech, or a prime minister's address to the nation on a national day. It is characterized by its focus on the matters of present occasion, on the elaboration of a subject's virtues and vices through praises and blames. The deliberative genre takes social, political issues and signals a future course of action. It is essentially a public discourse, much akin to the speeches of politicians to mass gatherings. The forensic genre is related to legal proceedings, especially the debates inside the law courts. It makes judgments about events in the past.

The canons and genres are complementary to one another. The discovery and choice of materials, the decision for organization and stylistic features depend largely on the type of discourse the rhetor intends to construct. The genres are the products of the canons and canons the genres' essential sources. Some scholars illustrate that the genres are the actual sources of invention, disposition and style. This is to say, knowledge of the genre and the readiness to create it inspires the type of ethical, logical and emotional materials as well as determines the overall textual construction and the choice of linguistic elements.

The contemporary applications of rhetoric incorporate a wide variety of subjects and disciplines beyond the one-to-one speaker-audience communicative situation. Jonathan Price calls rhetoric the "craft of communicating through one or more media with a particular set of audiences for specific purposes," a mode of communication that involves as many functions as "informing, entertaining, attacking, or reassuring – far more than just persuading" ("Chunking Content"). A more inclusive definition takes rhetoric for human use of symbols to communicate (Karen Foss 855, Sonja Foss 3). More than considering a human act, it is even perceived as

“a natural faculty,” incorporating “analogies in features of communication among non-human animals that live in groups and seek to influence each other’s actions by utterance or gesture” (Kennedy 146).

The *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* testifies rhetoric’s recent acceptance as a means of representing socio-cultural meanings within multiple disciplines. The *Encyclopedia* explains, “In recent times, scholars in such areas as philosophy, literary theory, and communications have renewed their attention to rhetoric as a way of understanding many areas of culture and social life” (1). The simple reason for this eclecticism is the effort of scholars to identify and popularize rhetoric “as a global phenomenon . . . a universal function of language,” not a “peculiarly Greco-Roman cultural activity” (Sullivan 103). The reason could also be rhetoric’s functional presence in all communicative artifacts, “both inside and outside the text” (Mailloux 21). Above all, the change in time has had a significant impact in the practice of and scholarship in rhetoric.

The emergence of multiple societies and new contexts of communication in the recent times have contributed to the proliferation of diversity in print, audio, video, or online texts resulting in the expansion of the scope of rhetorical study. Scholars, therefore, have voiced the need to extend the application of rhetorical scholarship to adapt to the diversity of texts and contexts. In this line, Hasian argues, “In a transnational world filled with mobile signifiers, commodities, and diasporic communities, our traditional ways of thinking about rhetorical theories, methods, and criticism will have to undergo massive changes” (22). Warnick contends that traditional notion of rhetoric, which considered the rhetor (speaker/writer) the principal source of persuasion or “followed the tradition in emphasizing the figures and tropes of style,” needs to be redefined to adapt to today’s “disorganized, open texts in cyberspace” (61). Warnick’s emphasis is on the “interactive and Web-based communication” of the digital world in which users switch across multiple environments in order to negotiate their identities through text-based channels and play with all the potential areas of language use and transactions.

Subsequently, the academic dimensions of rhetoric can be perceived in at least six representative definitions (Table 1 below). These include rhetoric as persuasion, art, communication, identification, invitation and symbolic convergence. The first three are broad definitions of rhetoric with clear classical orientation, as its being an effective verbal art. The remaining three expand the scope of rhetoric with new

functions and new components. For example, Burke's notion of identification and Foss and Griffin's invitation partly establish that persuasion alone cannot complete the essential function of rhetoric and that of human communication in general. Rhetoric as symbolic convergence is built in the aspects of group communication, and particularly highlights the concept that communication constructs realities for humans.

**Table 1 Representative Definitions of Rhetoric**

Definition	Basic Function	Components	Proponents	Fields of Scholarship
Persuasion	Move the audience	<i>Genres</i> : forensic, deliberative epideictic <i>Appeals</i> : ethos, logos, pathos <i>Canons</i> : invention, disposition, style, memory, delivery	Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian	Communication
Art	pleasure, inspiration, motivation	genres, tropes, verbal strategies	Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian	Literary Criticism, Rhetoric and Composition
Communication	Write and speak effectively	verbal and non-verbal symbols	Common parlance: Sonja K. Foss, Kennedy	Literary Criticism, Communication Studies
Identification	Search for a common ground	courtship, association, dissociation, consubstantiation, transcendence <i>Pentad</i> : act, scene, agent, agency, purpose	Kenneth Burke	Communication
Invitation	Rejection of competition and dominance	equality, imminent value, self-determination	Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin	Communication
Symbolic Convergence	Construction of shared reality	dramas, fantasy themes, rhetorical visions	Ernest Bormann	Communication

**Source: Author's compilation from different theoretical writings**

Rhetorical criticism (or rhetorical study) studies the process of communication. Kuypers notes rhetorical criticism as “a humanizing activity” in the sense that “it explores and highlights qualities that make us human” (13). The underlying human qualities make a critical act more of a subjective endeavor though a critic works with awareness of objectivity. Edwin Black contends, “Criticism is not supposed to be always objective. It is, of course, supposed to be always intelligent. More to the point, it is supposed to be always fair” (29). Only in the process of being fair the critic may switch between subjectivity and objectivity. Black further notes that “the relationship between objectivity and criticism is not constant, it is variable.”

More formally, Sonja Foss describes rhetorical criticism as a broad system of “qualitative research method that is designed for the systematic investigation and

explanation of symbolic acts and artifacts for the purpose of understanding rhetorical processes.” The method includes such “primary dimensions” as i) systematic analysis as the act of criticism; ii) acts and artifacts as the objects of analysis in criticism; and iii) understanding rhetorical processes as the purpose of criticism (6). Though generally perceived as widely polysemic and critical methods of communication studies, rhetorical discourses incorporate at least three overlapping paradigms of research. Eisenhart and Johnstone explain,

They [rhetorical discourses] are empirical, in the sense that they are based in observation rather than introspection alone; they are ethnographic, in that they seek to understand the rhetorical workings of discourse and context through the eyes and minds of those engaged in them; and they are grounded, returning again and again to their data as they build theory to account for it. (3)

There is a general consensus among rhetorical theorists about the freedom assigned to a rhetorical critic regarding the choice of a subject and a method. Kuypers explains, “The very choices of what to study, and how and why to study a rhetorical artifact are heavily influenced by the personal qualities of the researcher” (14). A similar idea, one that allows a critic’s ‘personal qualities’ to determine, is reflected in what Sonja Foss says: “The artifact you choose also should be something you really like or really dislike, something that puzzles or baffles you.” Foss’s suggestion to a rhetorical critic for meeting the challenge of determining an artifact is, “. . . let your interest in your daily encounters with artifacts guide you in your selection of an artifact” (10).

Regarding the choice of a method, Black takes a very liberal, as well as radical, stance. He assigns the critic a dominant position of the “only instrument of good criticism.” He prefers “convictions, values, and learning of the critic, . . . the observational and interpretive powers of the critic” to “any external perspective or procedure or ideology,” which corroborates his claim that “the method of rhetorical criticism is the critic” (32). Condit and Bates show identical stance in opposition to strict adherence to a method. They suggest, “Rather than adopt methods, rhetorical critics first adopt a critical posture and then choose critical referents for their analyses.” It is not necessarily the mastery in one or few methods that helps produce good criticism. A critic should rather have “received formal training in rhetorical

theories” so that she can select “referents that best help to understand a given text” (110). This idea comes closer to what Eisenhart and Johnstone call taking “an inclusive approach” (3) in the practice of rhetorical criticism.

But rhetoricians assert the importance of a perspective even though they agree that a critic could use her convictions and power of imagination in the analytical process. Kathleen German shows the need of “a critical methodology which brings the artifact into sharpest focus” no matter “whatever the approach” (87). So, the critic should take such perspective that “gives the reader new insights into the forces of rhetoric” (89). For Kuypers, methods “are not to be used as formulas, however” and though the perspectives/methods lend the critic certain view of the world, the critic “must direct the criticism” (22). In other words, perspectives are there “to help a critic, not direct the criticism.” Kuypers suggests that “a successful critic’s ideas blend in with those of the perspective” not that the perspective is “forced upon a rhetorical artifact” producing “mechanistic and rigid criticism” (23).

Thus, the contemporary practice of rhetorical criticism assigns relative freedom to a critic/reader. The following distinctions (Table 2 below) between traditional and contemporary modes of readings, drawn from Campbell (517), shed some light on the kind of shift rhetorical criticism has undergone over the years. The purpose here, however, is not to elaborate the distinction between the classical and modern ways of practicing rhetoric, but only to list the basic tenets of the shifts in rhetorical scholarship.

**Table 2 Classical vs. Contemporary Rhetoric**

<b>Classical/Traditional rhetoric</b>	<b>Contemporary rhetoric</b>
<b>influence by argument</b>	<b>influence by language</b>
<b>invention of the speaker</b>	<b>interpretation of reader</b>
<b>historical/biographical study of speakers and speeches</b>	<b>close readings of texts (literature, journalism etc.)</b>
<b>explication of a single text</b>	<b>critiques of bodies of text</b>
<b>conception of rhetoric as orally delivered speeches</b>	<b>re-conception of rhetoric as symbolic action through which as humans we construct the worlds in which we live</b>

Along these lines of shifts in scholarly practices, rhetoric sustains its position in three broad academic-philosophical categories<sup>1</sup>. The first concerns the wider field of rhetoric as an epistemological system. The field claims its orientation in studying histories and types of rhetoric and abstains largely from becoming a job-oriented scholarship. Scholars seeking to trace and develop specific versions of rhetoric in geo-cultural (such as Indian rhetoric or Nepali rhetoric, western or non-western rhetoric) and historical (such century-wise, decade-wise, era-wise practices) dimensions belong to this category. In the second category lies the aspect of rhetoric as a specific mode of communication. Rhetoric in this sense is one of the seven established communication theories, and rhetorical studies, in its numerous dimensions, is one of the methods of communication studies. The field has its wider applications in the study of the inter-personal, group, and mediated forms of communication. The third line of scholarship is rhetoric and composition studies housed under the English Studies departments, mainly of American universities, and centers of philological studies elsewhere. The field studies the rhetorical nuances of literacy practices and text productions in diverse socio-cultural settings with particular focus on the aesthetics of writing.

There is more to say about the contemporary expansion of rhetorical scholarship. Krista Ratcliffe attests to its permeation in as many as twenty different academic disciplines. These include areas as diverse as “advertising, anthropology, classics, communication, critical theory, economics, ethnic studies, law, literary studies, management, marketing, medicine, natural sciences, philosophy, psychology, rhetoric and composition, theater, theology, transnational politics, and women’s and gender studies” (185). Apart from such multi-disciplinary proliferation, the trend of contemporary rhetorical scholarship unfolds its expansion in equally varied critical-theoretical orientations (See Table 3). Rhetoric has its applications to such fields as poststructuralism, cultural studies, literacy studies, feminist studies, religion, program administration, and technical writing, among others. Likewise, as eclectic the disciplinary expansion, so diverse the methods of criticism. A count from three popular books on rhetorical criticism reveals as many as nineteen standard methods of criticism (See Table 3). Kuypers mentions over “60 formally recognized perspectives

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed explanation on these discourse terrains available in Anne Beufort “Rhetorical Studies, Communications, and Composition Studies.” *The Realms of Rhetoric*. Eds. Joseph Petraglia and Deepika Bahri. New York: State U of New York P, 2003. 229-246.

... with many more being used and with some critics even blending perspectives”  
(18).

**Table 3 Expansion of Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism**

SN	Types of Rhetorical Criticism	Disciplinary Extensions of Rhetoric
1	The Rhetorical Situation or Situational Criticism	Rhetoric and Poststructuralism
2	Neo-Aristotelian/Neo-Classical/Traditional Criticism	Rhetoric and Cultural Studies
3	Close Textual Analysis	Rhetoric and Literacy Studies
4	Genre Criticism or Generic Elements in Rhetoric	Rhetoric and Feminist Studies
5	Metaphoric Criticism or Criticism of Metaphor	Rhetoric and Critical Race Studies
6	Narrative Criticism or Narrative Perspective	Rhetoric and African American Studies
7	Dramatistic Criticism or Dramatic Form Criticism	Rhetoric and American Indian Studies
8	Pentadic Criticism	Rhetoric and Asian American Studies
9	Framing Analysis	Rhetoric and Latino/a Studies
10	Fantasy-Theme Criticism	Comparative/Contrastive Rhetoric
11	The Mythic Perspective	Rhetoric and Religion
12	Gender/Feminist criticism	Rhetoric, Technology, and Technical Writing
13	Ideographic/Ideological Criticism	Visual Rhetoric
14	Critical Rhetoric and Continual Critique	Rhetoric and Program Administration
15	Conceptually-Oriented Criticism	Rhetoric and the Teaching of Composition
16	Cluster Criticism	Ratcliffe, Krista. “The Twentieth and Twenty First Centuries.” <i>The Present State of Scholarship in the History of Rhetoric</i> . Ed. Lyne Lewis Gaillet and Winifred Bryan Homer. London: University of Missouri Press, 2010.183-236.
17	Generative Criticism	
18	Social Movement Criticism	
19	Eclectic Criticism	
Carl R Burchhardt (ed). <i>Readings in Rhetorical Criticism</i> . 4 <sup>th</sup> ed. Strata Publishing, 2010. Sonja K. Foss. <i>Rhetorical Criticism, Exploration and Practice</i> . 4 <sup>th</sup> ed. Waveland Press, 2009. Jim A Kuypers (ed). <i>Rhetorical Criticism, Perspectives in Action</i> . NY: Lexington Books, 2009.		

Social movement criticism is counted among the important fields of rhetorical criticism. The existing theories in this field primarily concern the aspects of categorizing movements and movement rhetoric and suggesting the methods of inquiry. Leyland Griffin perceives a social movement in two main types. The first is a “historical movement” characterized by the phases of “beginning, progression and termination,” and the second a “rhetorical movement” marked for discursive phases of “inception, development and consummation” (10). Similarly, Stewart suggests three general types such as “a revivalistic movement, resistance movement and innovative movement” (156). Simons presents a similar typology that shows four categories of social movement such as “reformist, resistance, restorative, and expressivist” (“Social Movement,” 751). Griffin further explains rhetoric of movement in such binary types as “pro-movement” and “anti-movement” in relation to their being led by supporting and opposing rhetors (11). Cathcart categorizes movement rhetoric as “managerial,” which aims to “keep the existing system,” and “confrontational,” which advocates abolition or modification of the system (97). Simons examines a movement in relation

to leadership and inherent rhetorical requirements, problems and strategies and, in particular, to the aspects of their situational applications as moderate, militant or intermediate rhetorical strategies (“Requirements, Problems and Strategies,” 40-41).

The process of movement studies is commonly understood as a matter of human choice marked by the quality of being accepted by a broader audience comprising informed rhetoricians. The method of criticism is normally message- and artifact-oriented. Sillars remarks that a critic can “focus on messages of all shapes and forms,” which adhere to the task of sampling artifacts from as different situations as “verbal and non-verbal, interpersonal and public, spoken and written, direct and electronic” (111). The present study follows the suggestion of making a human choice for an appropriate method and number of artifacts. The relevance of FTC in the study of April Movement lies in its focus on multiple exigencies and simply for dealing with what Lucas calls “more than a single discourse” (135). In other words, FTC, for its focus on subtle as well as broadly identifiable narratives in public rhetorical artifacts representing a multi-step communicative situation, suits the study of April Movement.

### **Editorials as Rhetorical Artifacts**

Scholars place rhetorical study as the first of seven major traditions of communication theory, others being semiotics, phenomenology, cybernetics, social psychology, socio-cultural theory and critical theory (Craig, “Traditions of Communication”). Because rhetoric primarily concerns communicating to influence, it has the scope of application in journalism. According to Roach, journalists practice rhetoric in at least three respects. First, they write to “produce an effect ... even when the desired effect is only to inform.” Second, they employ a style “based on the objectivity of scientific investigation” thereby allowing “certain rhetorical processes [to] govern the way they select, gather, and communicate news.” Third, they “participate in the ancient art of public address” by creating and disseminating “persuasive messages in the form of editorials, columns or analysis” (304).

One reason why journalism fits into the domain of rhetoric is its immediacy of coverage and the focus for public-interest issues. Most media texts, for their contextual values and concerns for the audience, are relevant artifacts for carrying out rhetorical criticism. For instance, advertising texts are the most frequent subjects of study. They are studied for the messages implied in the images presented, and mainly



to examine how the verbal/linguistic devices and visual texts attempt to persuade potential consumers to buy certain products. Another notable critical trend involves the study of photographic images (photojournalism) as “objects of strong emotional identification or response” (Lucaites and Hariman 37). Also in practice now is the study of the interactive and web-based communication present in the vast new media environments (Warnick 61).

In case of the print media, editorials suit best for rhetorical analysis for their being the texts of rhetorical nature. Majority postulations on editorials merge two rhetorical aspects of content and function. Hamlet defines that the main content of editorials is the combination of “fact and opinion” and their principal function is “to interpret news and public opinion” (“Editorials”). Stein and Paterno show that in editorials writers “strive to argue their case well enough – using accurate facts and statistics – to change other people’s minds” (8). Rolnicki and Taylor consider the main function of the editorial “to interpret the significance of an event (the news), to criticize something that has happened, to commend someone or some group for some achievement, or to advocate change and persuade readers that the paper’s viewpoint is worthwhile” (135). Rugar claims, “Editorials survived due to an existing need and space for argumentative discourse in the press” (599).

In all these postulations about the features of editorials the emphasis on persuasion appears recurrent. And persuasion is fundamental to any rhetorical discourse, to go by Aristotelian standards. Whether it is in changing other people’s minds (Stein and Paterno), advocating change and persuading readers (Rolnicki and Taylor), or in fulfilling the “need and space for argumentative discourse in the press” (Rugar), editorials are understood to perform rhetorical functions. This endorses Hamlet’s claim that all editorials are “designed to be persuasive – to sway readers to agree with the point of view expressed” (“Editorials”). Besides persuasion, an editorial’s rhetoricity involves its contemporaneity. This entails the broad aspects of making “acceptable suggestions about timely topics” (Miller 103) as well as explaining “the importance of the day’s events,” tackling “recent events and issues” and constructing perspectives “based on objective analysis of happenings and conflicting opinions” (Hamlet, “Editorials”). An editor’s awareness for contemporaneity, according to Narayan Wagle, underlies the everyday struggle for production and processing of information so that the paper remains responsible, credible and popular (33). The preparation of a daily editorial, Wagle notes, demands

that the editor is adept in selecting a topic of immediate value and in disseminating accurate information and credible perspective.

Locke explains an editorial's rhetorical quality in a number of dimensions. These include: i) authorial position – privileging in terms of location and typical anonymity ii) rhetorical purpose – conveying the newspaper's carefully weighed viewpoint on a topical issue, iii) authority of argument – taking recourse to statistics and the views of others, iv) structure – introduction, argued points, and judgment v) diction – formal but plain, vi) syntax – complex and rhetorically balanced (69-70). Locke's simplified three-part structure complements at least two other explanations. The first involves van Dijk's three parts – first, definition of situation which typically answers “what happened?”; second, evaluation of the news events” reflecting the editorialist's role as a critic and observer; third, conclusion or “recommendations about what specific news actors should do, or not do” (244). The second is Adrian Bolivar's “triadic structure”: Lead (L) or “aboutness and a posture,” ; Follow (F) or response to the posture with reference to more relevant examples and stories and Valuate (V) or closing with an “evaluation,” with restatement of the thesis and the publisher's specific recommendation (279, 293).

Furthermore, an editorial's rhetoricity underlies the fact of its essential grounding in a rhetorical situation. Lloyd Bitzer's theory of rhetorical situation explains this aspect. To illustrate, Bitzer argues that “rhetorical discourse comes into existence in response to a situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence in response to a question, or a solution in response to a problem” (5). One aspect of the situation is exigency which, according to Bitzer, is “an imperfection marked by urgency . . . a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (6). In other words, it is “some kind of need or problem that can be addressed and solved through rhetorical discourse” (Grant-Davie 266). Thus, exigency may be a consequence of certain happening in the past, but may as well result from “something that is about to happen, or from something that might happen if action is not taken – as in the case of many speeches about the environment” (Grant-Davie 269). Exigency underscores some form of anxiety, or of contingency, concerning real and possible occurrences. Exigencies are common in the real world, and therefore continue to trigger rhetorical responses. In Bitzer's words, exigencies abound because “the world really invites change – change conceived and effected by human agents who quite properly address a mediating audience” (13). In

forming a rhetorical discourse exigencies work side by side with “the complex of persons, objects, events and relations” which warrant that the discourses are “located in reality, are objective and publicly observable historic facts in the world we experience, are therefore available for scrutiny by an observer or critic who attends to them” (11).

The above postulations on editorials illustrate the link between editorials and exigencies. For instance, van Djik’s opinion about the function of editorials suggests that editorialists work with clear sense of response to “imperfection” or “need” through “formation and change of public opinion, in setting the political agenda, and in influencing social debate, decision making and other forms of social and political action (“Opinions and Ideologies”). Similarly, the editorialist’s scrutiny into real time, place and actors lies in the fact that an editorial “tackles recent events and issues, and attempts to formulate viewpoints based on objective analysis of happenings and conflicting opinions” (Hamlet, “Editorials”).

The idea now follows that the editorial’s connection to exigency is defined by its contemporaneity. As discussed earlier, contemporaneity entails the broad aspects of making “acceptable suggestions about timely topics” (Miller 103) as well as explaining “the importance of the day’s events,” tackling “recent events and issues” and constructing perspectives “based on objective analysis of happenings and conflicting opinions” (Hamlet, “Editorials”). Besides, an editor’s awareness of the topics of immediate significance contributes to this aspect. Hence, what Wagle underlines as the everyday struggle for production and processing of information to maintain responsibility, credibility and popularity holds relevance to editorial-exigence collaboration.

A survey of more than a dozen studies on editorials from the west during last one and half decade (1995-2010) reveals a consistent trend of alternation between or integration of contextual and textual approaches. Studies in contexts examine the nature of the responses to particular events and actors. The exigencies brought to focus involve such events as September 11 attacks on the Twin Towers, Iran’s nuclear program or the American point of view on Russia. There are some works concentrating on the editorials written by a particular editor on a particular subject. A number of studies seek to explore representation of cultural themes in specific disciplines. This category includes the topics like production of commonsense in genetic engineering and portrayal of race and ethnicity in biomedical sciences.

Also, majority of works involve a purely textual content analysis touching on one or other area of linguistics. Some of the areas thus examined involve the study of the differences between news reports and editorials as well as theme choice, verb transitivity and thematic progression in editorials. As varied as the thematic focuses are the approaches taken. A number of studies have applied qualitative content analysis in large corpuses of editorials. These works follow emic approach to arrive at broader socio-political themes like race, ideology, power and political biases, to name a few. Works making claims of rhetorical criticism have largely taken recourse to approaches like critical discourse analysis, systemic functional linguistics and argumentation analysis to name a few.

It is safe to note that most of the aforesaid types of studies fall under the broad category of rhetorical criticism for their being the studies in persuasive texts like newspaper editorials. In other words, such studies are rhetorical especially for their concentration on the analysis of textual maneuverings and rhetorical strategies prevalent in editorials. To infer from the discussion above, critical works on editorials take note of three main aspects of editorializing: representation of exigencies, structure and language of the text and the nature of the worldview. At least two works can be cited to represent this line of scholarship. In the first, Élisabeth Le examines how editorials use information sources as persuasive strategies. Le studies a corpus of 40 editorials dealing with Russia between August 1999 and March 2000, from two newspapers, *Le Monde* and *The New York Times*. Using cognitive-based linguistic model of discourse analysis, Le seeks to establish a link between the use of information sources and the degree of subjectivity. She argues that even an equal representation of all sides of an issue through support of external sources of information does not guarantee objectivity because “under the guise of bringing some objectivity to the editorials’ argumentation, external sources of information appear to facilitate and enhance their subjectivity” (503).

The other study by Izadi and Saghae-Biria establishes the notion that different newspapers’ editorial positions are unified when they deal with an exigency of a broad national concern. The study carries out critical discourse analysis to elucidate the ideological representation of US policies towards Iran’s nuclear program in the editorial positions of three “elite newspapers” such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal* from 1984 to 2004. The finding shows that despite differences in their policy recommendations, none of these newspapers

challenged the common American assumption that Iran had a surreptitious nuclear program. The editorials rather presented a unified position that the Islamic nature of Iranian government was a threat, and implied that Iran should not be trusted with sensitive nuclear technology (161-2).

Studies focusing on textual aspects examine intricate linguistic and structural features, with secondary regard for the nature of exigencies. These studies deal more with rhetorical strategies than exigencies, taking subjects like how newspapers produce common sense, or how editorials written in different socio-cultural contexts differ in the use of and share a number of micro structures in presenting certain worldviews. Rupar's case study of editorials on genetic engineering in New Zealand presents a best example of newspapers' production of common sense in relation to issues of public concern. Rupar discusses how discursive characteristics of one journalistic practice such as reporting facts in the news influence another journalistic practice such as expressing opinions in the editorial. The study attests to the fact that editors establish and maintain relations with the wider society through "reliance on other reports and press releases, or consultation among the senior reporters and editors" (607). Such study thus emphasizes the significance of a collaborative newsroom culture in defining newspapers public credibility.

Likewise, Ansary and Babbali seek to examine rhetorical commonalities in editorials published in three different socio-cultural environments. They study a total of 90 editorials sampled from three English newspapers (30 editorials each) published in three different socio-cultural environments by native speakers of English (*The Washington Times*), and non-native speakers (*The Iranian Times* and *The Pakistan Today*). In this contrastive rhetoric research using systemic-functional view of text, the researchers identify at least two categories of micro rhetorical structures in all newspapers sampled: the obligatory and optional elements. The obligatory aspects include headline, addressing an issue, argumentation and articulating a position, while providing background information, initiation of argumentation, and closure of argumentation formed the optional factors. With these findings, the authors argue, "No matter where they were written and by whom English newspaper editorials ... follow a generic macro rhetorical pattern which may characterize them as distinct genre" (234). This is to prove that editorials sampled from different socio-culturally and socio-linguistically different settings do not significantly differ in terms of frequency with which they employ rhetorical elements.

Amid the diversity of themes and approaches taken, exigencies get the general precedence in the studies of newspaper editorials. Exigencies remain within the publisher's editorial priorities and the editor's critical scrutiny. These are the bases of facts, of existence, and of the visibility of phenomena on which the editorial artifacts are based. In FTC exigencies are evaluative measures to verify a vision's connection with reality. These are the "here-and-now phenomena that add credibility to the dramatistic interpretation presented within the rhetorical vision" (Shields and Preston 108). In other words, these bind rhetorical visions and fantasy themes with the objective realities and material facts of the public record, and thereby help in sustaining a vision (Bormann, Cragan and Shields, "Three Decades," 293). Formally, the exigencies are also the bases of the very basic and concrete elements such as characters, actions, settings, cues, sagas and sanctioning agents. And these help distinguish the notion of 'fantasizing' and 'symbolic reality' from the oft-confused 'fantastic' and 'fictitious.'

One study on editorial representation, to which my work with FTC bears some similarity, is Pei-Ling Lee's analysis of the editorial commentaries related to the exigencies of the 2004 referendum in Taiwan. Lee presents a fantasy theme reading of 36, 29 and 42 editorials, respectively, from three major Taiwanese newspapers, *United Daily News*, *China Times*, and *Liberty Times*. She takes notes of the representative dramatis personae, actions and settings and analyzes rhetorical visions present in the three newspapers. Lee finds that the papers showed different points of view in support or opposition of the referendum. Lee claims that the three papers' rhetorical convergence lies in the fact that they "did not indicate the presidential candidate they tended to support, but offered enough clues by portraying villains in fantasies" (116).

### **Making Connections**

The main aspect that adds to the significance of studying *TKP* and *THT* in this thesis involves their positions in the time of crisis and transition. This concerns the question of how their roles have been generally perceived in the way they responded to the exigencies of the eventful period surrounding the April Movement. A 2007 study of the press's status during the initial months of the king's direct rule reveals a situation when these and most other papers were apparently less vocal. Paudel and Mainali remark that almost all independent dailies were initially "hesitant" in their

response to the royal takeover. According to them, the largest, *Kantipur*, “stood out for not reporting on the opposition to the king’s action,” which was even less courageous stance than those of the newspapers “that seemed more supportive of the takeover” (xii). Yuva Raj Ghimire supports this argument with a note that “[M]ost private sector media including the big Houses like Kantipur Publications and *The Himalayan Times* did not oppose the royal regime and censorship initially” (133). Manjushree Thapa claims, even *TKP*, “the country’s biggest English language daily” did not seem to voice against the takeover with apparent boldness in that it rather chose to publish “non-sense editorials like ‘Socks in Society’ – a thoughtful treatise on how socks without holes are a prestige symbol in a poor country like Nepal” (91). This, Thapa remarks, did only a little to ridicule the royal censorship on independent media, but had no spirit of inspiring opposition to the government.

The private media including *TKP* and *THT* are seen to have taken bolder policies only in later months of the royal rule. “*Kantipur* became a vocal advocate of full press freedom and democracy (Paudel and Mainali xii),” and so did *TKP*. For this, entire Kantipur Publications has drawn much admiration for being an important factor in the 2006 change. Acknowledging *Kantipur*’s contribution in the people’s movement Shree Prashad Ghimire puts, “All pro-republican people have openly appreciated the remarkable role played by Kantipur Television and *Kantipur* Daily. Not only in Nepal, Nepalis living abroad have lauded these media [My translation]” (128). Pushpa Luintel’s light-hearted remark also carries this notion, “The *Kantipur* daily had become the forerunner of Girija Prashad Koirala’s movement for the restoration of parliament. Writers and wiseacres like Kanak Dixit and CK Lal had even named it as the eighth political party [next to the parties in SPA][My translation]” (159).

However, hardly anything is said about *THT*’s role except what Yuva Raj Ghimire postulates about its not opposing the royal move at the beginning. Mainali and Paudel’s study of *Annapurna Post*, *THT*’s the then sister publication in Nepali, could indicate that right after the royal takeover, *THT*, like its sibling, must have showed a suggestive detachment from the political issues. What is true of the plight of *Annapurna Post* should also be of *THT*, under the editorial policy of their parent, International Media Network Nepal Pvt. Ltd. But the reading of editorials from beyond November 2005, which is integral to the present study, shows that *THT* was critical about the royal regime during the movement. It contributed more editorials on

politics during the November-April period than *TKP*, and thus covered a greater diversity of exigencies.

The dailies' transition, therefore, appears to be from silence to boldness. The transition implies their own movement from the state of submission to gradual openness for advocating political reform and restoration of press freedom. The transition also depicts their adherence to the need of change, the spirit of dynamism and confrontation – a rhetorical sensibility typical of the rhetors of social movement. And when we mention a newspaper's voice and adherence, we mean the editorial stance it maintains about the issue it covers. So, what spirit of dynamism and rhetorical sensibility are reflected in the discourse of movement the papers represent in their editorials? The present study aims to address these concerns.

Moreover, this study meets the demand of scholarly discourse on the historic April Movement in at least three respects. Broadly, it explores the representative rhetorical perspectives on the political developments during the crucial months of transitions surrounding the April protests. Its novelty mainly lies in being an extensive study on the textual representation of multiple exigencies of the six-month period. At the same time, the study complements the dearth of scholarship on the perspectives of Nepal's two leading newspapers, *TKP* and *THT*, in the backdrop of the general attributions to media's significant presence during the movement.

Overall, the study aims to present an alternative perspective on the history of April Movement itself. With FTC as the principal critical method, the study not only explains the broader rhetorical representation of familiar exigencies in editorial discourses, but also recaptures the movement's historicity in multiple dimensions including the major actors, actions, settings, guiding factors, inside metaphors, historical achievements, discourse communities and rhetorical visions. In this respect the study significantly departs from earlier postulations both on critiques of April Movement, and the studies of editorials in general. The thesis in this sense rewrites the history of the movement through the lens of rhetorical discourse while taking recourse to the analysis of representative narratives and commentaries on the groundbreaking political exigencies.



### CHAPTER III

#### **Fantasy Theme Criticism**

*Since we are flooded daily with rhetoric, admirable or contemptible,  
we are in desperate need of serious rhetorical study, everywhere.*

- Wayne Booth

Fantasy Theme Criticism (FTC) is an established rhetorical perspective considered relevant in the study of movement discourses. John F. Cragan calls it “a method for sorting out and evaluating public discourse which may provide parameters and a rhetorical structure for the phrase, ‘the rhetoric of’” (69). In connection with the present study, this critical perspective helps examine how the selected newspapers represented the ‘rhetoric of April Movement’ and of the overall change in Nepal surrounding the crucial phases of the April protests. This section introduces FTC’s theoretical base, the Symbolic Convergence Theory, outlines the general process of carrying out FTC, and describes its application in the present study.

#### **Symbolic Convergence Theory**

Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT), a general theory of communication developed by Ernest Bormann in 1972, explains that rhetoric is a product of the attempt to seek common grounds among discourse participants. The term ‘symbolic’ suggests the presence of language and fantasy while ‘convergence’ refers to the experience of an “exhilarating meeting of the minds” through sharing “the same opinions and emotions” (Bormann, “Rhetorical Vision” 724). In other words, symbolic convergence means a situation when “two or more private symbolic worlds incline toward each other, come more closely together, or even overlap” to create “group consciousness” and “cohesiveness” (E. Griffin 252; Foss 97). SCT’s basic tenet involves the value of mutual understanding towards formation and experience of broader social realities. Besides, SCT is primarily grounded in a premise of communication as the means of building consensus. The theory acknowledges the fact that all forms of human interactions underlie symbols that tell stories and dramatize human actions, which participants in communication identify with and conceive as their own actions, experiences, ideals and visions.

SCT grew out of studying the rhetorical patterns of small group interactions. Its main theoretical base explains that group members are emotionally charged and get prompted to extend communication when they share messages that dramatize issues concerning common memories of the past or ideals for the future. Such memories and ideals contribute to the formation of rhetorical visions. Public discourses, which grow from small communicative groups, carry as well as amplify the groups' visions which then flow to mass media, and, finally, to the larger public (Bormann "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" 398; Ball 217). Widely shared public discourses are then understood not only to help "sustain the members' sense of community" but also to "impel them strongly to action" again and again and to "provide them with a social reality filled with heroes, villains, emotions, attitudes (Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision" 398). A rhetorical reading of public texts such as newspaper editorials through FTC primarily looks for the "evidence of symbolic convergence" which, according to Foss, lies in "frequent mention of a theme, a narrative or an analogy in a variety of messages in different contexts" (98). In other words, fantasy theme criticism is a kind of close reading done with a purpose to trace rhetorical visions and underlying stories and dramas.

A number of representative terminologies familiarize the theory and the method. Bormann, Cragan and Shields, the principal interpreters of SCT over the years, present five major conceptual categories associated with the theory and the method. They classify these as Basic, Message Structure, Dynamic Structure, Communicator Structure, Medium Structure and Evaluative concepts. A brief introduction to these broader concepts provides an operational definition of the main terminologies pertaining to the theory and method applied in the present study.

In SCT the basic concept is fantasy theme. A fantasy theme is a dramatizing message that depicts characters engaged in action in a setting that accounts for and explains human experience. And the "dramatizing message" describes "past, future, or outside events [as] creative interpretations of there-and-then" (E. Griffin 248). The word "fantasy," with its etymological root in the Greek word *phantastikos*, is a referent for a symbol "which is able to present or show to the mind, to make visible" (Ball 218). In this sense, fantasy is the "creative and imaginative shared interpretation of events that fulfils a group's psychological or rhetorical needs" (E. Griffin 250). The term fantasy is a unit of discourse and a representation of fact, different from what common lexicons describe as a referent for the unreal or imaginary.

Fantasy theme is also the basic unit of analysis in Fantasy Theme Criticism. It may be any class of referent as long as a phrase, a sentence or even a paragraph, but “depicts either of the structural elements of rhetorical visions, i.e. the *dramatis personae*, plotlines, scenes, and sanctioning agents” (Shields and Preston 105). The *dramatis personae*, plotlines and scenes, also known as characters, actions and settings function as separate constituent fantasy themes suggesting communication as a drama and communicative artifact as a dramatic representation. The *dramatis personae* may be depicted as “heroes, villains and supporting players.” A character fantasy theme may graphically describe the *personae*’s “characteristics, assign motives to their actions, portray them doing certain things or manifesting certain behaviors and place them in a given setting or scene” (Shields 6). In other words, character themes describe the agents or actors in the narratives represented in an artifact, reveal their traits reflect certain motives associated with and identifiable in them.

Plotlines, also called scenarios, refer to the actions in a communication as performed by the *dramatis personae*. Action themes help explain “whether the rhetorical vision is passive or active, a comedy or tragedy, a quest or surreal . . . and indicate the time of the vision (past, present or future orientation)” (Shields 6; Foss 102). Actions also suggest whether the reality portrayed through a communicative artifact is palatable or unpalatable, righteous or unrighteous, practical or impractical. Then, scenes or the setting themes describe the physical or rhetorical space “where the action takes place, the place where the characters act out their roles” (Shields 6; Foss 102). In some communications the scene becomes crucial as it “appears to influence both the qualities attributed to the actors or characters and the plotlines within the vision” (Shields and Preston 107). In other cases, a setting presents itself as a character embodying a particular emotion. For example, Nepal as a setting in relation to the narrative of poverty alleviation stands as a character representing the emotion of suffering and backwardness.

Fantasy themes present in any communication can sometimes be a part of an overarching belief or authority known as sanctioning agents also called legitimizing authority. The sanctioning agents are the norms that justify the “acceptance and promulgation of a rhetorical drama” (Shields 7, Shields and Preston 108). This is to relate the norms with giving legitimacy to an action, and to participation in an act of public visibility. The sanctioning agent is sometimes a higher power such as “God, justice, democracy,” and other times “a particularly salient here-and-now phenomena

like the atomic bomb, a warring conflict, a crucifixion and resurrection” (Shields and Preston 108). It can equally be a form of formal structural mandate such as the Constitution, law and code of conduct or universal norms like human rights, sovereignty and press freedom.

Other concepts associated with fantasy themes include symbolic cue, fantasy type, and saga. These in fact are both corollaries and composites of fantasy themes and thereby represent the presence of one or more communicative dramas containing characters, actions and settings. A symbolic cue is like an intimate metaphor, “a cryptic feature of the verbal and nonverbal communication” that provides evidence that fantasy themes have chained out or that a community has shared common experiences. It is a “shorthand indicant or code that stands for a fantasy theme such as a sign or symbol or an inside joke” (Bormann, Cragan and Shields, “Three Decades” 283), or an “agreed-upon trigger that sets off group members to respond as they did when they first shared the fantasy” (E. Griffin 251)

A fantasy type is “a cluster of related fantasy themes, greater abstractions incorporating several concrete fantasy themes that exist when shared meaning is taken for granted” (E. Griffin 251). It is “an umbrella term for a cluster of recurring, related fantasy themes” containing “recognizable plotlines, scenes, situations and representations of people” (Antoine, Althouse and Ball 207). It is “an archetypal fantasy theme,” (Shields and Preston 105), a “stock scenario used to explain new events in a well-known, dramatic form” (Bormann, Cragan and Shields, “Three Decades” 284). A saga is a referent for “achievements in the life of a person, group, community, organization, or nation” representing “symbolic consciousness of an organization as culture” in which members of a communicative group are tied together “in diverse rhetorical visions” (Bormann, Cragan and Shields, “Three Decades” 284). In relation to public discourses, a saga concerns the portrayal of “important historical events, failures as well as successes” and also the reiteration of “mission statements, histories, personas who are heroes and those who are villains” (Bormann “Rhetorical vision” 725). The concept best depicts cases of a nation like Nepal undergoing political transition; its “achievements, failures and successes,” and the associated “heroes” and “villains” in the historical political context like the 2006 movement.

SCT's major message structure concept is rhetorical vision. Bormann defines rhetorical vision as “a composite drama that catches up large groups of people in a

symbolic reality.” The concept is called “rhetorical” because the larger symbolic structures are constructed by rhetorical imaginative language triggering shared fantasies” (“Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision” 398). “Such a vision,” Bormann elucidates,

is a unified putting together of the various scripts, thereby giving the participants a broader view of things. A rhetorical vision is constructed from fantasy theme that chain out in face-to-face interacting groups, in speaker audience transactions, in viewer’s of television broadcasts, in listeners to radio programs, and in all the diverse settings for public and intimate communication in a given society. (398)

Likewise, Shields and Preston explain that rhetorical vision is composite “because the rhetorical embellishments of numbers of people have contributed to the descriptions of the *dramatis personae*, the plotlines, the scene, and the sanctioning agent(s)” (106). Examples of rhetorical vision may include the concepts like Black Power, Secular Humanism, Radical Feminism, Social Economic Justice (Shields and Preston 106) in a broad global context. In contemporary Nepal issues like Human Rights, Peace Process, Constituent Assembly and Federalism suggest such rhetorical visions participated and idealized by a large section of conscious, communicative population. In Cragan’s words, “A rhetorical vision is a blend of discursive material, ‘here and now’ events, and fantasy themes which are woven together to form a drama that is credible and compelling” (69). This is the postulation addressing the rhetorical nature of printed artifacts like newspaper editorials or books on contemporary issues which tend to recount the distant and immediate and embody the experiences of people who participated in the corresponding events.

SCT’s dynamic concepts include three “master analogues”: righteous, social, and pragmatic. These signify three categories of rhetorical visions. “Righteous” rhetorical visions “rely upon fantasy themes that stress correctness, the right way, morality, and so forth.” “Social” visions “stress such elements as humaneness, social concern, family, brotherhood and sisterhood, and so forth.” And the visions under the pragmatic master-analogue concern such elements as the “bottom line, what will work, what is expedient, and so forth” (Bormann, Cragan and Shields, “Three Decades” 288). Frey suggests concerns for proper and improper, superior and inferior, just and unjust as additional components of the righteous visions; friendship,

trust, caring and compatibility for the social, and factors like utility, efficiency, practicality and minimum emotional involvement for the pragmatic (14). Antoine, Althouse and Ball put that righteous rhetorical visions may be shared by those “who take part in a consciousness that is dedicated to some overarching cause or position.” They take social rhetorical vision as the celebration of “interpersonal relationships and the development of good families at the concrete level as well as in the utopian envisioning of the future achievement of the family of humankind’s residing at peace on the spaceship earth.” Social rhetorical visions, therefore, “feature idealistic notions of harmony and freedom, as relationships are paramount concerns.” A pragmatic rhetorical vision “is shared by people who seek practical and utilitarian views . . . extol the virtues of science, of effectiveness, and of common sense” (210).

SCT’s major communicator concepts, namely Fantasizers and rhetorical community, describe who communicates to whom, who produces messages that contain shared stories and who shares these stories. Fantasizers are communicators capable of conveying messages that dramatize past events and dreams of the future, which participants in communication (readers, audience) identify with and own as their own realities. A public speaker, a writer or an editorialist can act as a fantasizer. Similarly, a rhetorical community comprises “those people who participate in a common rhetorical vision . . . share inside jokes and . . . respond to shorthand fantasy themes and messages in ways that are in tune with their common rhetorical vision” (Shields and Preston 108). The notion of rhetorical community underlies that the rhetoric of a particular communicators’ group “often reflects a particular communication style as part of their vision” (Bormann, Cragan and Shields, “Three Decades” 290).

The mediums for symbolic convergence are fantasy sharing and fantasy chaining. Fantasy sharing is the interaction of common beliefs and experiences in different communication contexts. Sharing is possible because of fantasy chaining, or the process in which fantasy themes are transferred and caught in consecutive moments of communication. Convergence is understood to foster best in a medium that enhances group sharing or public sharing beyond mere personal fantasizing. Bormann clarifies that fantasies that begin in small groups often “are worked into public speeches, become picked up by the mass media, and spread out across larger publics” (399). Through channels of group and public sharing, there is an increase in embellishment and evolution of fantasies. Such increase results in rhetorical

community's coming together to "have a stake in the symbolic construction" (Bormann, Cragan and Shields, "Three Decades" 290). In case of mediated communication, "evidence of chaining may become manifest when creators of texts borrow, adapt and disseminate frequently-used, dramatized images and ideas" (Antoine, Althouse and Ball 207). This suggests that through dissemination of images and ideas by mass mediated artifacts the initial dramatizations of fantasies among a few people can result in a shared symbolic reality for a bigger collectivity.

Three primary technical concepts are applied in judgement of the quality and effects (outcomes) of fantasy-sharing among the members of a rhetorical community. These are fantasy theme artistry, shared group consciousness, and rhetorical vision reality-links. Fantasy theme artistry concerns the rhetorical creativity and novelty of presentation that describe the "competitive advantage" of fantasy themes, symbolic cues, fantasy types, rhetorical visions, and sagas (Bormann, Cragan and Shields, "Three Decades" 291). Artistry in other words is the use of certain rhetorical strategies, or any element of language that highlights the character, plotline, scene, and sanctioning agents. It lends ground for a critical assessment of the degree of consistency between real occurrences and fantasy themes in allusion to the "symbolically depicted character attributes, scenic elements, and plotline actions" (Shields and Preston 109). In the same way, shared group consciousness reminds the critic applying SCT to make sense of the "occurrence of symbolic convergence" (Bormann, Cragan and Shields, "Three Decades" 291). Occurrence of convergence is literally perceived in the way similar fantasy themes and rhetorical visions emerge in different phases of communication. Likewise, rhetorical vision reality-links concern the actual events and facts about which communication takes place and texts are produced. These are the 'here-and-now phenomena' which show a direct connection between fantasy themes and rhetorical visions and justify the formation of a rhetorical community. This is to say, such real occurrences bind rhetorical visions and fantasy themes with the objective realities and material facts of the public record, and thereby help in sustaining a vision (Bormann, Cragan and Shields, "Three Decades" 293). The reality-links as evaluative measures help distinguish the notion of 'fantasizing' and 'symbolic reality' from the oft-confused 'fantastic' and 'fictitious.'

The interconnections of the aforementioned technical concepts best describe a complete process of communication and criticism. It is understood that communication occurs between fantasizers and rhetorical community

(communicators) who share and help stories to chain out (communicate) by presenting fantasy themes, fantasy types, rhetorical visions, sagas, and symbolic cues (messages). The message is propagated through group or public sharing (medium), and is defined in terms of pragmatic, righteous, or social analogues of fantasies and rhetorical visions (communication dynamic). The message is then interpreted for fantasy theme artistry, rhetorical vision reality-links, and shared group consciousness (evaluation). Thus, a representative fantasy theme study takes account of the presence and interplay of these concepts and ensures that the artifacts under study are coded and analyzed within the purview of the aforesaid process of communication and critical perspective.

SCT and FTC faced charges of incompleteness and opacity at least during the early days of gaining a critical niche in rhetorical scholarship. For instance, G. P. Mohrmann went so far as to consider the entire perspective “a house of cards.” He said, “Remove one scenario, strike one persona, delete one fantasy theme, or banish one fantasy type, and disaster is foretold” (311). For him, the method was not anything more than a cookie-cutter formula useful only for undergraduates, and its critical community a mere “coterie” (312). Another critic, Williams, remarked that “the steps to take when conducting a fantasy theme analysis [were] not clear” (11). This was to indicate that Bormann’s 1972 essay did not adequately explain the process of fantasy theme analysis and the construction of rhetorical visions. Yet another critic, Joshua Gunn, remarked that Mohrmann’s charge on the lack of clarity in SCT, “betokened the diminished popularity of the theory” (Gunn 50).

SCT proponents responded such criticisms with fair caution and composure. For example, Bormann answered Mohrmann’s invective on the lack of acceptability saying that “riding an idea as hard as one can” could result in “error and overstatement,” but “careful and rigorous evaluation” was the right way to “hold new ideas developments within proper limits.” So, the criticisms had rather “forced” Bormann and his peers to “undertake a thorough study of the foundations of the approach and to think through the implications” (“Ten Years Later” 305). Gunn’s speculation on the decline of SCT was also a mistaken endorsement of Mohrmann’s criticism. First, any theory, including SCT, “[did] not die over time” but, like Aristotle’s rhetorical theory, continued to serve as “vibrant means of rhetorical criticism” (Bormann, Cragan and Shields, “Defending,” 367). Second, despite



abolitionist critiques such as those of Mohrmann, SCT already “transcend[ed] time and culture” (Ball 224).

As a testimony to the popularity of SCT and FTC, Bormann, Cragan and Shields (“Three Decades”) outline at least five different fields of communication studies where they have been applied. These include interpersonal communication studies, small group communication studies, public communication studies, organizational communication studies and mass communication studies. Studies in interpersonal communication have taken such aspects as problematic communication, changing patterns of relationships, and questions of relationship satisfaction. Studies in this field explain that “visions we hold have an impact on how we define ideal relationships and we act in relationships” (294). Similarly, researches in small group communication take such themes as ‘impact of fantasizing on the building of identity and culture in groups,’ influence of SCT in small group communication such as its “role in consciousness-raising, group culture building and group motivation” (295).

In the same way, scholars in public communication studies have considered the aspects like ‘persuasion in the public arena.’ Studies in this field recommend that “fantasy themes could be discovered, refashioned and used in public relations campaigns” (295). Furthermore, works in organizational communication have taken up issues like construction of corporate symbolic reality (296) and nature of communication among culturally diverse professional communities and “likelihood of both communicative interaction and intercultural problem-solving” within an institution (297). Finally, works in mass communication, which study communication and artifacts from areas as diverse as print, television, radios, news portals, discussion groups and online campaigns, basically seek to “capture media-situated rhetorical visions” (297).

### **FTC Process**

The general research trend in FTC involves detailed textual studies of artifacts which are purposively selected for their having some proof of symbolic convergence and rhetorical visions. The materials thus sampled may include “persuasive postures, specific movements, campaigns, speeches, and conversations” which comprise symbolic realities with which people – of any small or large groups and organized units – are believed to identify (Shields and Preston 102). In this sense, FTC is essentially an archival research method in which selection of certain artifacts

presupposes that fantasy themes and rhetorical visions have already been created. The critic's task then is primarily to discover these themes and visions.

The common procedure of FTC rooted in Bormann's initial suggestions includes four steps such as choosing an aspect of communication, collecting evidences of dramatic communication, clustering fantasy themes for fantasy types, and compiling the rhetorical visions. The procedure is described in detail by Foss in *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, a seminal textbook on the methods of rhetorical criticism, and by Antoine, Althouse and Ball in their article "Fantasy Theme Criticism" included among established rhetorical perspectives in *Rhetorical Criticism: Perspective in Action*, another detailed guide on rhetorical studies. Besides, Ball has extensively discussed the evolution and application of FTC in "Ernest G. Bormann: Roots, Revelations, and Results of Symbolic Convergence Theory" an essay included in *Twentieth-Century Roots of Rhetorical Studies*.

The standard method of FTC outlined by the above authors and works involves five broad steps. The first concerns the selection of a topic, an aspect of communication or a communicative event, which incorporates texts produced by "a decision making group, a rhetorical controversy, a social group, a support group, a rhetorical community, a policy-making unit, a political campaign, a social movement, or the like that is intellectually intriguing, about which there are questions to be answered" (Ball 220). This is to say, a fantasy theme critic may select "virtually any topic for analysis" but with a surety that they "must be ready to argue (1) for the topic's social significance and (2) for its role in some kind of persuasive process" (Antoine, Althouse and Ball 209).

The critic then selects artifacts, the texts containing evidences of symbolic convergence. Such artifacts may be "audio-tapes or videotapes of group meetings, memoranda, group transcripts, letters, speeches, recollections of participants, interviews or whatever records are available" (Ball 220; Antoine, Althouse and Ball 209). According to Foss, the text for analysis could be "any artifact that is popular – an advertisement, a song, a book, or a film" or one "produced by a major public figure, such as US President's speech or a commencement address by a talk-show host," which incorporates themes that "resonate with the audience." Foss further postulates that both "discursive and non-discursive artifacts" are used to carry out FTC provided that the artifacts contain evidences of symbolic convergence (101). A rich FTC also presupposes the selection of multiple texts from a considerably longer

stretch of time so that the critic can see multiple patterns of fantasy chaining and convergence.

Second, the critic reads the artifacts thoroughly to find the evidences of symbolic convergence, taking the texts as essentially dramatic constructs containing characters, actions and settings. This is also the point where analysis of the artifacts begins with reading and annotating the texts. Reading generally involves “careful examination of the artifact, sentence by sentence in a verbal text or image by image in a visual artifact” where a critic minutely records “each reference to settings, characters, and actions” (Foss 101; Antoine, Althouse and Ball 209). Simultaneously, the critic searches within the artifacts for “evidence of shared narratives, dramatic communication, imagery, figures of speech, and the like that are clues to periods of fantasy sharing” (Ball 220), or primarily a fantasy theme alluding to the interpretation of “an audience’s past, present or future, as revealed by the given texts (Antoine, Althouse and Ball 209). Apart from looking for new instances of fantasy sharing through identifiable character, action and setting themes, a critic also scrutinizes the elements that underlie previously shared narratives, such as symbolic cue, fantasy types and sagas. Also, it is useful to take notes of the reality links – the rhetorical exigencies – on which the artifacts are based, and the sanctioning agents, which validate the eminence of fantasy themes and fantasy types.

Categorizing messages is another phase of analysis in FTC. Categorization is done in two levels. First, all the character, action and setting themes are grouped in broader, more representative character, action, and setting themes. This process leads to the second level of categorization in which fantasy themes are perceived and clustered under “umbrella like headings called fantasy types” (Ball 220). The fantasy types contain “similar plotlines, scenes, characters, or situations” (Antoine, Althouse and Ball 210). FTC, therefore, marks fantasy themes as functional species of real events and their corresponding characters and settings, and fantasy types as “a kind of genus, or the broad category” of fantasy themes (Ball 220).

The most important analytical phase in FTC concerns the identification, construction and analysis of rhetorical visions. This is to come to the point of explaining the nature of rhetoric the selected artifacts have represented. The critic at this stage synthesizes the fantasy themes and fantasy types into representative abstractions identifiable as shared symbolic realities. Ball explains, the abstractions should contain “heroes and villains . . . valorization of some emotions and not others,

scenic backdrops or settings . . . behavior that is praised and behavior that is censored . . . and a multitude of beliefs and values” which ultimately become warrants for arguments and actions (220). One way to construct rhetorical vision is to see individual character, action and setting themes in interrelationship. This, in Foss’s words, involves looking at the major setting themes and linking them with the characters depicted in those settings and the actions those characters are performing (103). This is to say, each broad character theme seen in relation with corresponding setting and action themes potentially reveals one rhetorical vision. A critic may find more than one rhetorical vision functioning within a given communicative chain. This is particularly more applicable if the size of artifacts is large and involves multiple rhetors from a longer span of time than one particular rhetorical situation. In its entirety, the process leads to an explication of the nature of communication represented by the artifacts analyzed. The critic can thus infer broad social, cultural and historical connections with each of the major concepts identified and brought to light.

### **FTC in the Present Study**

This study draws largely from the aforesaid process of FTC, and therefore seeks application of the majority of the SCT concepts (as shown in Table 4 below). The main aspect of communication (the context) is the April Movement and its surrounding exigencies. The main communicative artifacts purposively selected for criticism are the editorials of *TKP* and *THT* for the period between Twelve-Point Agreement and the end of May 2006. These two newspapers have been selected on the ground that they were the only corporate English national dailies in operation during the April Movement, and that they extensively editorialized political exigencies surrounding the movement.

### *Reading at Multiple Levels*

FTC’s polysemic nature of scrutiny required reading the selected editorials in multiple levels. The main substantive explication followed a two-step reading, and involved two purposes: to identify in each editorial the main exigency and one or more critical responses on each exigency, and to make sense of the nature of the dailies’ involvement in the movement. This type of reading helped in three-fold ways. The exigencies and responses formed an analytical chronology of historical events. These also led inferences to the dominant forms of rhetorical stances taken by *TKP*

and *THT* on the major exigencies. Most important of all, the reading revealed eight complementary narrative patterns identifiable as the major fantasy types each signifying one representative actor of the April Movement. The actors thus identified are the Alliance, Maoists, regime, security forces, judiciary, Nepalis, media and international community. This discovery necessitated a more intensive, word-by-word reading of each editorial.

**Table 4 SCT-FTC Application in the Study**

SN	SYMBOLIC CONVERGENCE THEORY		FANTASY THEME CRITICISM	
	Concepts	Formal Terms	Common Process	Application in the thesis
			1. Selecting the aspect of communication and artifacts	- Aspect: April Movement - Artifacts: Newspaper editorials
1	Basic	Fantasy theme, character, action, setting, fantasy type, symbolic cue, saga, sanctioning agent	2. Finding evidences 3. Categorizing messages	- Identifying dramas (exigencies) and messages (Chapter IV) - Tracing characters, actions, settings, and symbolic cues in the editorials; - Formation of and discussion on eight representative narrative fantasy types each based on one main movement actor (Chapter V)
2	Message structure	Rhetorical vision: composite of fantasy themes; constituents – characters, actions, settings, fantasy types, symbolic cue, saga	4. Constructing rhetorical visions	- Identifying and categorizing eight broad classes of competing rhetorical visions each corresponding with the main narrative type (Chapter VI) - Discussion on the righteous, social and pragmatic aspects of the three rhetorical phases
3	Dynamic structure	Master analogues: righteous, social, and pragmatic rhetorical visions		
4	Communicator structure	Fantasizers and rhetorical community	5. Analyzing the nature of rhetoric/ communication	- Analyzing the April Movement in three rhetorical phases (Chapter VI) - Identifying and analyzing the factors that legitimized the individual classes of rhetorical visions and the major sagas attached to the visions, - Discussion on the rhetorical communities (Chapter VI)
5	Medium structure	Fantasy sharing and fantasy chaining		- Discussion on the main aspects of communication (political themes, historical realities, rhetorical stances) shared by <i>TKP</i> and <i>THT</i> with reference to existing discourses on the April Movement - Discussion on the major implications of the work (Chapter VII)
6	Evaluative	Fantasy theme artistry, shared group consciousness and rhetorical vision reality links		

The second level scrutiny involved a detailed reading of each editorial with an aim to find evidences of fantasy themes related to dramatis personae, plotlines, settings, sanctioning agents, symbolic cues, and rhetorical visions corresponding with each of the dominant narrative types. This was followed by taking notes of the explicit rhetorical visions as reported by the editorials from the contemporary documents, and constructing other pertinent rhetorical visions as composites of the fantasy themes corresponding to each narrative. In a sense, as each of the eight narratives contained seven concepts, at least fifty-six representative semantic

categories were at hand for further explication. But the number of categories leading the analysis was much higher because each concept yielded at least three themes in average.

Subsequently, fantasy themes and other key concepts were identified through consistent scrutiny of each editorial. *Dramatis personae* were found in the form of positive (hero) or negative (villain) referents and protagonist and antagonist attributes. Categories of deeds represented in action verbs, which involved the aspect of direct impact in the coverage of exigencies, formed the plotlines. Focal and peripheral locations with both geographical and political meanings emerged as the settings of the main actions. Contextual and universal factors which warranted impact of an action, prominence of a character, relevance of a setting and validity of a rhetorical vision were identified as the main sanctioning agents. These included moral, religious, constitutional, legal, political, cultural, social and institutional norms and practices. Terms that had metaphorical significance and involved explicit or cryptic narratives from both historical and contemporary times were recognized as symbolic cues. Events of historical and contemporary impact were taken as the principal sagas, which were further examined in the light of their connection with the rhetorical visions and ownership by the principal actors.

### *Analysis*

Each of the eight narratives synthesized from the six months' editorial discourse are presented in a descriptive-analytical form with a metaphorical heading (e.g. 'Critics and Cronies' for international community and 'Fearful Protectors' for the security forces) to suggest a quality of a fantasy type. Each narrative involves four major concepts of SCT in sequence – *dramatis personae*, plotlines, settings and symbolic cue. The sequence completes the story of an actor in their historical significance with details of characterization, actions, settings and symbolic referents. The stories lend the aspect of the characters' performativity in the drama of April Movement and equally maintain the value of historicity.

Two categories of rhetorical visions are noted in the study. The first category contains the competing rhetorical visions pertinent to individual actors and their narratives. These are inferred from the actor's general historical prominence and taken as valid for their representation in documents like agreements or proclamations as well as in the selected editorials. The visions are analyzed for their links to

sanctioning agents and the nature of their connection with historical sagas and ownership within a rhetorical community. The second category involves composite rhetorical visions inferred from the individual visions and broader narratives on the movement. These visions are representative of the rhetorical aspects of April Movement and reflect a chronology involving resurgence of political activities, revitalization of national ethos and restructuring of the state. The three phases are further examined for their representations of the pragmatic, social and righteous rhetorical analogues.

### **Relevance of FTC**

Fantasy Theme Criticism has relevance to studying a movement in a number of dimensions. First, it is based on the broad concept of symbolic convergence, which means unification of agendas that is very likely to manifest in physical coming together to materialize one or more shared visions. While taking account of fantasy themes, fantasy types and rhetorical visions, the approach identifies a rhetorical community of the main actors and rhetors who have shared common beliefs and dreams and helped construct and show ownership to the visions. In the same way, the fantasy theme perspective interprets the main actions and occurrences reflected in artifacts thereby revealing a representative sequence of events in the form of a historical chronology. FTC then elucidates the main conflicts underlying the historical movement having unveiled binary relations between protagonists and antagonists or positive and negative actions. Besides, the perspective regards geographical and ideological settings as fundamental to the existence of and negotiation between actors, actions and visions. While the consideration of sanctioning agents recognizes the presence of an authority legitimizing the visions and corresponding actions, discovery of symbolic cues helps interpret the creation and circulation of intimate metaphors widely communicated within the rhetorical community. Finally, FTC takes note of prominent occurrences, the sagas, which evidence to have given the movement actors a sense of achievement and ownership to the visions and sanctioning agents.

In recognition to FTC's eclectic application, Sillars points that nearly all studies using fantasy theme analysis "qualify as movement studies" (113). This is to say that FTC fits in the study of nearly all political movements. Moreover, since its focus is on rhetorical analysis of public discourse in view of how shared visions of groups of people get reflections in texts of wide circulation, study of a movement

bears high relevance for its potential for very frequent and large-scale text production. FTC's main relevance equally lies in its potential for scrutinizing "the pattern and impact of multi-step information flow" (Antoine, Althouse and Ball 225), which is characteristic to a movement as it occurs in multiple phases and gets represented in multiple texts.

The April Movement culminated from the unification of agendas; it grew out of the TPA between parliamentary parties and the insurgent Maoists. The agreement's physical manifestation was the mass protests that forced monarchy to back off. FTC is relevant for studying the pattern of communication and nature of reality construction for the period of more than six months this study involves. Since FTC observes how stories in messages chain out to a cumulative audiences, the study of editorials which analyze such stories should reveal how the stories persistently catch up in different periods of time, and how each new reality connected with the preceding course of events and thus continued further. The study of the political situation before and during the 19 days reveals the reasons for the upward trend of people's participation. In the background that corporate media reported the urgency of thrusting a resultant movement against autocracy and that the protest expanded and intensified each day, FTC helps explain how *TKP* and *THT*, as mainstream publications of the time represented this upsurge of mass participation.

### **Delimitations**

The study samples only the corporate broadsheet English dailies, *TKP* and *THT*. Since the rhetorical perspective, Fantasy Theme Criticism, scrutinizes dissenting visions and actors and multiple discourse settings within individual rhetorical artifacts, the study comprehends and foregrounds the counter-rhetorical elements in the analytical process itself. Thus, the exclusion of a set of explicitly contradictory artifacts is purposeful. The corpus includes the editorials on political issues, so the discussion on other topics of editorial value is either excluded or given tertiary relevance.

Foremost, the study is only a representative critical act. It applies one selected rhetorical perspective, FTC, and foregrounds what its majority categories best correspond in the editorials. This leaves a number of other important dimensions either unexplored or to the background. This partiality is natural; a rhetorical artifact, such as a newspaper editorial, "is a multi-dimensional, complex, and nuanced event,"



and that “there exists no one best way of viewing it” (Kuypers 18). The burden of the sense of incompleteness falls only on the critic and the readers while the artifacts under analysis remain all the more polysemic after each critical inquiry. The critic’s effort, as well as the responsibility, is to provide a most credible analysis from the elements discernible through the perspective applied. The present work reflects the awareness that more could be explored through other methods of inquiry.

### **Critic’s Position**

In general, the 2006 Movement counts as one of the indelible experiences of Nepalis living in Nepal through different phases of transition. But, to someone like me, who has seen a number of political upheavals in the prime of his career in the proximity of the capital city Kathmandu, a most happening place in the country, the nineteen-day agitation may have rendered one of life’s most unforgettable spectacles. Moreover, a person in critical discourse studies, like myself, with the everyday responsibility of observing, making sense of and imparting issues of currency from the location of a university, cannot remain untouched by the events most proximate to his lived realities. So, living through transitions of a society which is largely characterized in terms of discriminatory treatments of people either under autocrats or anarchists, I cannot feign to live in complete indifference of what goes around in the very base of my upbringing. Moreover, my choice of the discourse of April Movement promises to record the interest in knowing, documenting, and interpreting the intricacies of that historical event.

My reading of the editorials is substantively informed by my familiarity with the rhetorical situations the newspapers editorialized. I have closely followed and written diaries on the political changes in Nepal with some curiosity in how political conflicts were taking complicated turns and why the principal political actors were goaded by the challenge of finding acceptable solutions. The editors and I lived the same real time and may have upheld similar pro-democratic stance about the country’s political transitions. This is where the study demands actual ethical clarity, in working through the lines of my being both a participant and observer of the movement. I have a commitment to ensure a disinterested proximity with the happenings of the movement despite my relatively substantive exposure to it. I am aware of the need of having what Kuypers terms “a fair and open mind, with a detached curiosity” (24) regarding my role as a critic and my engagement with the

artifacts. I intend to maintain “disciplined indifference” (Black 30) to my own personal inclinations and lived conditions. This involves the awareness of the need to reduce the fallacies of unwarranted contentions, *ad hominem* arguments and hasty generalizations.

I attempt to maintain a critical standard through justification, reasonable inference and coherence – the parameters suggested by Sonja Foss (18). For justification of the claims, I try to supply ample quotations from the editorials and available discursive texts. In making inferences about the principal themes and visions, I am careful that my readers should be able to “see and appreciate” how I arrive at my claims. Regarding coherence of presentation, I maintain that the findings do not contradict one another and are inherently consistent. The overall presentation more or less follows Leyland Griffin’s advice about acting in the manner of “the literary historian rather than that of the statistician” (13). In this line, the concern is to “preserve the idiom in which the movement was actually expressed,” which is to draw from the language of the editorials to the extent possible. Here, the intention is to avoid atomization and then to “convey the quality of dynamism, the sense of action” with as much chronology as is deemed appropriate.

Overall, I study the editorials from a humanistic perspective. This involves conceptualizing the contents as what Klaus Bruhn Jensen postulates “as the representation of a particular context.” Furthermore, I adhere to Jensen’s idea that “the key contribution of the humanities to qualitative research is an emphatic commitment to studying the language of particular texts and genres in their historical setting” (18). So my approach to the editorials works beyond chronicling the political developments in a hard visible sequence of events. I rather focus to examine how editorial language helps produce historical knowledge of the groundbreaking April Movement.

## CHAPTER IV

### Exigencies and Editorial Critiques

*I'd rather be a newspaper editor than the richest man in the world.*

- Nelson Poynter

This chapter uncovers a chronology of political events during the 191 days, through a three-phase structure of pre-movement, movement and post-movement time frames. It reports the main political issue commented by each sampled editorial, and explains at least one prominent message from each. The purpose is to explicate the exigencies (the micro-contexts or reality links) that constitute the rhetoric of April Movement. A text-by-text examination of the editorials equally reveals the stances of each newspaper on the issues covered and helps understand the papers' collective points of view about the political transitions of the 191 days.

The nineteen-day mass uprising during 6-24 April 2006 constitutes the actual April Movement. Given that editorials literally appear after the exigencies, the actual coverage of the nineteen days' happenings last from 7 to 25 April. The period includes altogether 31 editorials (*TKP*: 15, *THT*: 16) from the selection. On the same basis, the pre-movement editorial coverage falls between 23 November 2005 and 6 April 2006, which takes happenings from the point of signing the TPA to the day the protests started. So, my first selection for this period from both papers is the November 24 editorials on the TPA. The number of editorials from this period is 131 (*TKP*: 52, *THT*: 79). Similarly, the post-movement phase is specified here including altogether 52 editorials (*TKP*: 20, *THT*: 32) from 26 April to 31 May 2006, which takes the representations from the point the protests ended to the signing of the 25-Point Ceasefire Code of Conduct on May 25.

#### **Pre-Movement Exigencies**

As stated above, the pre-movement phase covers the period between the end of November 2005 and the beginning of April 2006. This period literally involves the preludes to the main nineteen-day April protests with at least three significant historical events to note beyond the signing of the TPA. The first event is the conduction of municipal polls on February 8, the results of which marked the regime's inability to materialize electoral practices. The second is the dissolution of

the RCCC by the Supreme Court, which signified the judiciary's active resistance to the royal regime's unconstitutional undertakings. The third event includes the second-round understanding between the SPA and the CPN-M in which the two sides reinvigorated their collective promise to usher a pro-democratic movement against the regime. The editorials of *TKP* and *THT* have given adequate attention to discuss the exigencies about and surrounding these events.

The editorial responses in November, following the TPA, come in two forms. The first includes the newspapers' own perspectives on the context and contents of the agreement. For instance, *TKP* acclaimed it as "unprecedented" and "historic" where the mainstream political parties and the insurgent Maoists had shown timely "political acumen" ("Unprecedented"). *TKP* signaled that monarchy still had potential for preserving its position in the future courses of events. For *THT* it was a path-breaking development towards ushering political solution to the long-drawn armed conflict led by the Maoists ("Come with the Wind"). *THT* also recognized the shift of previous tripolar conflict – which included monarchy, parliamentary forces, and the Maoists – to a bipolar situation as the parliamentary parties and the Maoists had come to sign the TPA to confront the monarch-led government. *THT* further noted that with the alliance of the parliamentary parties and the insurgent Maoists, the political ball had finally fallen in the royal court and that the king's decision would determine whether he would get a space in the ensuing scenario or would be devoid of any position because the course to constituent assembly appeared "irreversible."

Both *TKP* and *THT* marked the fact that the TPA remained silent about the future of monarchy. They indicated that it spoke only about the signatories' roadmap up to constitution assembly elections, but made no point about the position of monarchy in the restructured state. The papers saw the possibility of space for monarchy in the future political structure only if the monarch behaved well in the ensuing days. Regarding the king's policy of non-compromise, the papers forecast, the TPA equally signified a bloodier confrontation ahead; the king's adamant stance in the backdrop of the SPA-Maoist convergence would culminate in intensity of violence and uncertainty in the country. The TPA, thus, had left the political burden in the king and redirected the potential international pressure upon him. The king's behaviour from this point onwards would define whether he would face international isolation or win friends (*THT* "Come with the Wind").

The second form of response by *TKP* and *THT* examines the implications of the TPA surrounding other exigencies including the government's stance and reaction to it. *TKP* analyzed the post-TPA scenario in relation to at least two issues. The first involved the positive impact of the agreement on the "conflict-afflicted" people, such as the increase in their expectation for peaceful changes so that those displaced from villages during the armed conflict could relocate. *TKP* argued that amid on the backdrop of the TPA's promise for reconciliation between parliamentary parties and Maoists, the conditions for the rehabilitation of the displaced would have to be improved so that those who desired to return home, who were either victims or victimizers, faced no likelihood of reprisal on their return. The parties would, therefore, have to transfer the spirit of the recent high-level alliance into a political reconciliation in the grassroots. This would unite local party cadres to form resistance against the "elements of regression" which otherwise would "sow a seed of mistrust" as much as to "oppose the peace agreement" ("Move Prudently"). *TKP* reported Madhab Kumar Nepal, the then General Secretary of CPN-UML, as admitting the need of a second-round dialogue with the CPN-M to focus on the resolution of the armed conflict in the light of the "plans for rehabilitating the displaced" as well as for demanding from the Maoists the end of "extortion and forceful donations."

The forceful shutting down of Radio Sagarmatha by the government on the charge of airing CPN-M chairman Prachanda's BBC interview invited stringent comments from *TKP*, which condemned it for an act of repression against press freedom. The act not only reflected the continuity of autocracy through suppression of "people's voice," but also hinted at the government's blatant "dislike towards the 12-point peace proposal, because the rebel leader was only speaking about ways to maintain peace in the country." The attack on Sagarmatha implied the government's message that the SPA-Maoist convergence mattered naught in the way the king and the royalists ruled the country. *TKP* took a clear position against this event, "We believe that civilized societies within and outside the country understand what kind of uncivilized regime takes pride in gagging the press" ("Repression"). *TKP* also urged the royal government "to immediately return the equipment" seized from Radio Sagarmatha.

*THT* made a case on the outright rejection of the TPA by the ministers and the pro-palace figures such as Tanka Dhakal, Ramesh Nath Pandey and Satchit Shamsher Rana, all of whom indicated the government's possible non-compromise and open

confrontation in that the parties had sided with “terrorists.” The paper warned that it was the king, the actual credible authority, who would have to speak at such crucial moments but not his ministers and cronies. Only the king’s sensible response would help avert further conflict. *THT* also pointed at the necessity of talks between parties and Maoists “to address all remaining doubts and differences” (“The Usual Suspects”).

The subjects *TKP* covered in December included SC’s stay order against the government’s ban on news broadcasting by FM stations, stoning at crown prince Paras Shah’s carcade at Baneshwar by protestors, corruption by royal ministers and officials, cabinet reshuffle and induction of new ministers, and continued violence and violation of human rights despite Maoists’ unilateral ceasefire during the post-TPA days. Similarly, visit by Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Sharan, killing of civilians by an RNA soldier at Nagarkot, and Vice Chairman Tulsi Giri’s claim of the government’s success in its roadmap were the subjects of the remaining editorials. At least two editorials commented on the judiciary: one about the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nepal Bar Association, and the other on the need of keeping the Court immune from political intervention.

*TKP* remained critical of the royal government throughout December. It called the stay order a case of judicial activism against the repression of press freedom (“Landmark Order”), and stoning of the carcade an offshoot of public frustration against the royal member as well as the slackening in the country’s security situation amid confrontational politics (“Finger Pointing”). It hinted at the royal regime’s dwindling credibility due to corruption by its stalwarts and demanded handing over power to the people (“Handpicked Loyalists”). The paper took the cabinet reshuffle to be the king’s message of non-compromise and hard-line stance against the pro-democratic alliance, and suggested that the SPA and the CPN-M were in further need of solidarity since the king did not seem to relent for a possible democratic solution (“Relentless Move”).

Furthermore, *TKP* questioned the civic accountability of the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) in the case of the Nagarkot killings (“Gory Massacre”), and dismissed Tulsi Giri’s claims about the government’s successes in weakening Maoist insurgency as audacious and impractical (“Audacious Remark”). Continuation of arbitrary arrests, rapes, torture, and human rights violations in the two political prognoses – the TPA and unilateral ceasefire – marked the volatility of situation. Here the regime still

featured in a negative light for not reciprocating both the agreement and the ceasefire (“Work for Peace”). *TKP* also took Indian Foreign Secretary’s visit to Nepal with a serious note as embodying India’s anticipated presence in the offing of the confrontation between the palace and the political parties (“Meaningful Visit”). The paper appreciated the contributions of Nepal Bar Association and anticipated its “greater role” during the constitutional crisis (“Bar at 50”). Likewise, it raised the issue of new appointments in the Supreme Court and warned about potential interference of the autocratic government upon the judiciary at a time when there was no democracy in the country (“Protect Judiciary”).

*THT* presented equally varied subjects in December. The TPA featured twice, followed by Supreme Court’s stay order in favor of newscast in FM stations, one-month’s extension of unilateral ceasefire by the CPN-M, Supreme Court’s challenge against the RCCC, and the reshuffling of the council of ministers by the king. *THT* also wrote on Shrisha Shamsher Rana’s warning to media houses, growing conflict within the RPP, killing of civilians in Nagarkot by an RNA soldier, NC leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai’s urge to the king to rise above controversy, and Tulsi Giri’s rejection of reconciliation with the pro-democratic alliance. The remaining issues covered by *THT* included Chief Election Commissioner’s request to parties to participate in the upcoming municipal polls, appointment of three judges in the Supreme Court, widening rift between the palace and the parties and contradiction in Tulsi Giri’s stance regarding the municipal polls.

*THT* communicated its gradual impatience with the regime, in particular, and the overall political situation, in general. It extended the subject of the TPA both as a cause of further political collision because of the king’s non-reciprocation, and an opportunity for further confidence-building if the conflicting parties, especially the palace, could take it as such (“Angle of Repose”, 1 Dec. 2005). It reported the significance of such case that a friendly country like Switzerland welcomed the agreement and advised the king to reciprocate with a ceasefire “to engage in a political dialogue” (“As the World Turns”). The paper also covered two cases related to the Supreme Court’s challenge to the government – the stay order in favor of FM newscasts, and the ruling against the RCCC. It called the order as “a major setback to the government” (“Stars Are Born”) and alluded the ruling to dwindling relevance of a Hindu monarch’s claim for divine identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (“Clowning Glory”). The enlargement of the cabinet from 24 to 35 members, for *THT*, was of less public

interest and more of the palace's message of no-compromise to parties "at the cost of tax-payer's money" ("Sunset Boulevard").

Three exigencies that *THT* critiqued stringently were Shrishya Shamsheer Rana's warnings to media houses, the killing in Nagarkot, and appointment of judges in the Supreme Court. About the first, the paper insisted that the government, which was not an elected one, had no right to admonish media "how to think" ("Lame Duck Euphony"). The Nagarkot killings reflected "poorly on the army," so *THT* questioned the credibility of their role as "protectors of civilians" ("Big Question Mark"). Similarly, the appointment of judges signified the regime's effort to create a stronghold in the judiciary by inducting pro-palace figures ("Piano Lesson"). On the RPP case, *THT*'s stance was that the intra-party conflict had resulted from a contest for grabbing ministerial positions, which also reflected a growing trend of disintegration within political parties in Nepal ("Flip-Flop Syndrome"). Bhattarai's advice to the king to rise above controversy implied the political parties' authority in lending the monarchy an opportunity for salvaging itself ("Salvaging Act").

Tulsi Giri embodied a misplaced vision, in his ordinary Panchayat mindset and unconstitutional position when he rejected reconciliation with political parties thereby trying to detach people from Nepal's sovereignty ("Ordinary Mind"). Giri is also noted to have presented himself poorly with his contradictory statements regarding the polls – election at all costs or possibility of postponement – and his calling leaders "fanatics" and "threatening to jail them" ("Arctic Dreams"). The Election Commissioner's call for participation in municipal polls appeared irrelevant amid parties' "distrust" for the government, and against their resolution to boycott or foil the elections ("Dicey's Song"). *THT*'s general concern at the end of December was about the condition of "widening rift between palace and parties" and further inevitability of "confrontation and bloodshed on a larger scale" because first, "King's men" were showing "no potential for understanding" and, second, party leaders were "hardening their stance" ("The Great Divide").

At least five subjects appeared distinctly common in both the papers – SC's stay order against the ban on FM newscast, cabinet reshuffle, Nagarkot killing, Tulsi Giri's remarks and continuation of uncertainty. Both papers highlighted the gradual rise in the anti-government activism of the judiciary, government's policy of hard-line and non-compromise against the political parties, questioning of or loss in RNA's accountability towards protection of civilians, Tulsi Giri's counter-rhetorics against



the growing political convergence, and the possibility of greater crisis in the days ahead. Besides, while *TKP* took note of exigencies like attack on crown prince's carcade, corruption by royal officials and visit of Shyam Sharan, *THT* prioritized responses to the TPA, extension of unilateral ceasefire, Shrishya Shamsheer's admonitions, hassles in RPP, Bhattarai's advice to the king, Election Commissioner's call to parties, and the appointment of judges in the Supreme Court.

The January 2006 editorials of both the papers suggested deepening political crises. The imminent municipal election and issues surrounding it featured the most during the whole month. *TKP* attempted to expose different aspects of the ongoing crisis, being consistently acerbic to the activities of the royal regime, and partly supportive of the parties' stances. *THT* pronounced as much criticism about the government's works as about other vicissitudes of current politics. Both papers signaled a foreboding of greater confrontation and damage amid heightened political polarization, with the government apparently readying itself to counter the SPA-Maoist alliance.

*TKP* showed apparent dissatisfaction with the government's adamant attitude towards the dynamism of the opponent camps – the parties and the Maoists – despite the clear indication for more human damage to result from its stubbornness. The paper suggested the urgency for the government's reciprocation to the ceasefire and the TPA by declaration of truce instead of going headlong into municipal polls ("Declare Truce"). While the regime gradually consolidated its hard line, in total disregard for ongoing political developments, the Maoists ended their four-month unilateral ceasefire, which *TKP* called an "Unfortunate Decision" and held the government responsible for pushing the country to further uncertainties.

*TKP* took critical notes on a number of other exigencies. It showed concern for the ensuing "aggressive mood," and the ministers' light remarks about human casualties being natural during the municipal elections ("Human Casualties"), the split in RPP that added to the trend of political disintegration in Nepal ("Polarizing Politics"), the government's nonchalance towards the cold-wave victims of Terai ("Cold Wave"), and the increase in corruption within the monarch-led system ("Corrupt System"). The paper equally disowned promulgation of a finance ordinance calling it "incomplete" and the repetition of Panchayat policy ("Finance Ordinance"), and lamented the government's disregard of the opportunities for peace-building and its insistence on holding municipal polls ("On Collision Course").

Similarly, violation of election codes by transfer of 200 DSPs (“EC Code Violated”), imposition of curfew in the eve of parties’ demonstration (“Sheer Despotism”), mass protest and parties’ defiance (“Message of Jan 21<sup>st</sup>”), continued violence by the Maoists (“Renounce Violence”), and police atrocities against protestors (“Stop Police Brutality”) featured in *TKP* as some of the pressing exigencies of the time.

*THT* equally carried the mood of increasing political tension in majority of its January editorials. The issues like the end of unilateral ceasefire (“The Razor’s Edge”), immediate resumption of attacks by the Maoists (“Second Thoughts”), parties’ rejection of Home Ministry’s call for dialogue (“Building Bridges”) and their restatement for boycotting the municipal polls amid Maoist threats to foil it (“Poll Dilemma”) suggested gradual rise of resistance against the regime. On the contrary, Raj Parishad’s increasing activism on behalf of the monarchy (“Twilight Rhetoric”), mass arrests of political leaders and cadres by the security forces (“Turning Point”), and imposition of curfew and curb on fundamental rights (“Gathering Storm”) described the government’s repressive attitude towards incumbent political resistances. The government’s announcement of insurance cover for poll candidates (“No Laughing Matter”) confirmed its steadfastness for holding the municipal elections, whereas the withdrawal from candidacy by 600 poll candidates (“Swallowing Camels”) questioned the rationale of the election itself. Besides, the report that the general convention of NC-D decided to drop constitutional monarchy from its constitution (“Blackbird’s Spoken”) suggested the dwindling of pro-monarchist political factions in the country.

*THT* reiterated its critique on the controversies in the RPP. The paper dovetailed the whole saga of rifts and tensions leading to the emergence of a dichard pro-palace party, RPP-Nepal, led by the then Home Minister Kamal Thapa (“Untimely Wrinkle”). The split formally followed RPP chairman’s decision to allow district committees to decide on the nature of participation in the municipal polls, which was a move unbefitting the party (“Les Miserables”). The debate on the claim for election symbol first reached the court (“Footlight Parade”) and then to Election Commission, which then decided to freeze the symbol of the establishment faction in support of the splinter party (“Holding the Baby”). But *THT* attributed this split as much to the contest among the leaders for joining king’s government as to president Pashupati Shamsheer Rana’s “uninspiring leadership” (“RPP vs RPP”).

Both *TKP* and *THT* sounded apparently concerned about the absence of an immediate solution to the political polarization. December appeared to have been less propitious to the government in that it faced a few set-backs from within, especially from the judiciary. The parties were shown in a more legitimate position with their agendas of establishing democracy and bringing peace in the country, to which the regime was functionally opposed. The January editorials focused more on the rising tension amid a number of happenings including the end of ceasefire followed by the resumption of Maoist attacks, parties' protests and government's curfews and arrest drives. The mood of peaceful settlement, which the foregrounding of the TPA agendas embodied in the previous month, was shadowed by the foreboding of a greater confrontation surrounding the February 8 polls. But while *TKP* took greater heed of the 'stubborn' aspects in the regime and the spiraling conflict, *THT* created a larger picture of the political setting contributing to the atmosphere of tension.

In its representation in editorials February 2006 was historically significant for a number of reasons. First, the king completed one year's absolute rule leaving much ground within and without for assessment of his successes and failures. Second, the royal government held its much coveted municipal polls amid stringent opposition of parliamentary parties and the CPN-M. Then the Supreme Court ordered dissolution of the RCCC, which had by then been a powerful royal body to harass political leaders. And, the mood of non-compromise and violent collision remained while the regime kept to its roadmap and the CPN-M intensified country-wide attacks. Both *TKP* and *THT* editorialized these crucial exigencies and remained consistently critical in their judgments.

Most of the *TKP* editorials of February were focused on the government's activities. The issues covered included one year of king's rule, Chief Secretary's order to the civil servants, business community's disillusionment with the regime, municipal elections, Supreme Court's challenge to RCCC, attitudes of the rulers of Nepal, banning of the movie *Balidan*, mischief of a police inspector, and amendment of the Civil Service Act. Two other pertinent topics also surfaced with some tinge of *TKP*'s resentment: American ambassador James F. Moriarty's urge for palace-parties alliance to exclude Maoists, and abduction of Surya Nepal staffs by the CPN-M cadres.

As much as in earlier times, *TKP* remained greatly dissatisfied with the royal government. Its first February editorial evaluated the past one year of king's absolute

rule and called it a failure (“February One”). This critical tone sustained throughout February. *TKP* slammed Lok Man Singh Karki, the then Chief Secretary, for passing an “Offensive Order” to civil servants to mandatorily vote in the upcoming municipal elections. It marked that the business community, who earlier allied with the king, were now disillusioned by his rule and that their disillusionment gestured king’s further isolation within the country itself (“Disillusioned”). The paper declared the February 8 municipal polls, which had seen poor voter turnout, to have become a fiasco in the government’s roadmap for democracy (“Poor Show”). *TKP* rated the court’s challenge to RCCC as an evidence of the judiciary’s commitment to the rule of law (“Who’s Responsible?”), and held the rulers of Nepal – Shahs and Ranas, in particular – the main stumbling blocks in Nepalis’ attainment of sovereignty (“Eluding Democracy”).

Furthermore, in *TKP*’s point of view, the banning of the movie *Balidan* came in the series of violations of freedom of expression by the government (“People’s Voice”), and extortion by Inspector Suresh Dhungana and IGP Shyam Bhakta Thapa’s “silence” about the former’s misdeeds proved the security forces’ lack of accountability towards people (“IGP’s Silence”). The only case about which *TKP* sounded positive concerned the government’s proposal to amend the Civil Service Act of 1993, which advocated benefits for government staffs (“Bureaucracy’s Delights”). Such hint of empathy for the civil servants was also reflected in *TKP*’s castigation of Chief Secretary’s repressive order to vote in the municipal elections. Besides, *TKP* remained clear in its emphasis for and belief in the SPA-Maoist alliance towards restoring democracy. It, therefore, dismissed Moriarty’s advocacy for palace-parties reconciliation and his mantra of excluding Maoists from the peace process (“American Paranoia”). For this reason, the paper urged the Maoists to release the abducted Surya Nepal staffs and to earn credibility of a changed party respecting their alliance with the SPA, the adherents of peaceful movement (“Free Surya Staff”).

*THT*’s February editorials covered at least seven broad subjects. These included king’s one year rule and his speeches, municipal elections, works of the judiciary, outsiders’ concerns for Nepal, Maoists’ activities, government’s attitude and implications of Sher Bahadur Deuba’s release from the prison. The issues that featured the first category involve king’s February 1 speech, assessment of the one-year royal rule, and king’s democracy day (February 19) speech. The editorials on municipal polls reported cases as diverse as the attack on Lalitpur mayoral candidate,

UNICEF's dissatisfaction over placing poll booths in public schools, Maoist strike to disrupt the polls, Shrishya Shamsheer's threat to punish law violators, poor voter turnout in the February 8 polls, and government's rejection that the election was a failure. *THT*'s focus on the judiciary involved the dissolution of RCCC and the implications of this move. Editorials representing outsiders' concerns for Nepal reported Amnesty International's call for human rights protection in Nepal and the US warning to the SPA against their alliance with the CPN-M.

In addition to its earlier urge to the CPN-M to end strikes during the elections, *THT* reported Maoists' announcement of strike for April. It also depicted repercussions of Maoists' operations such as seizing of Oil Tankers in Agaiya, Banke, killing of a constable in Nepalgunj, and bomb explosion in Pokhara. *THT* made a case of the hike in oil price as the depiction of the government's insensitiveness to people. It also raised concerns about the introduction of nationalistic curriculum in schools. Deuba's release from prison was the subject *THT* presented in a relatively less serious note for its being of little public interest.

*THT*'s critical gestures were pervasive in February editorials, especially in its notes on the king and his government. The most remarkable observations involved such subjects as assessment of the king's rule, the implications of municipal elections, the dissolution of RCCC, and the government's policy of introducing nationalistic education. The paper judged king's February 1 speech, which had deliberately excluded the mention of mainstream political parties, as mere reiteration of his roadmap and an unrealistic assessment of the political situation and the regime's own popularity ("Same Time Last Year"). Of relative significance was the remark of international community, especially the USA, that the royal government had been visibly unsuccessful in bringing political stability during its one year rule ("Walk the Line"). The paper's take on the municipal polls was of total castigation, such that the polls had seen only 20 percent voter turnout further invalidating the regime's claim of agency for democracy, and pointing at its inability to resolve the ongoing political conflict ("On the Murky Pond").

*THT* gave emphatic coverage to the dissolution of RCCC, the "exceptionally controversial" body, by the Supreme Court. The paper called the court verdict a milestone step taken by the judiciary "to set right a major constitutional wrong by the executive" ("Righting a Wrong"). The scrapping of RCCC along with nullification of all its previous undertakings, according to *THT*, weakened the establishment ("Loud

and Clear”), and evidenced that there was no room for a “constructive” monarchy in the ensuing political scenario (“All the Pretty Horses”). In the government’s policy of nationalistic education the paper perceived a “questionable intent” to promote ultra-nationalism and to revive Panchayat-type democracy (“Deficient Diet”). However, one case for which *THT* held both the government and the CPN-M responsible was the absence of the vision of crisis resolution in both. The king was shallow in his peace agendas making “no cue for settlement” (“Hell-Bent for Heaven”), calling only “interested” parties for dialogue (“Beyond the Sunset”), and showing no efforts in “lessening crisis of the people” (“Reality Check”). The CPN-M’s moves were at times futile, such as in imposing strikes to disrupt the polls that had already been foiled by the boycott of parliamentary parties (“Call It Off”), and other times condemnable for continuation of violence and violation of human rights.

Both papers wrote on at least six distinctly common subjects: one year of king’s rule, municipal polls and low turnout of voters, dissolution of RCCC, American stance on Nepal’s crisis, king’s version of democracy and Maoist strikes and violence. Their perspectives nevertheless differed. While *TKP* openly claimed the one year royal rule to have become a failure, *THT* reported the USA to have called it unsuccessful. *TKP* rated the election as a fiasco: *THT* took it for a blotch to the regime’s credibility. To *TKP*, the dissolution of RCCC depicted judiciary’s activism for the rule of law. It stood to *THT* for an act to right a constitutional wrong. The king’s version of democracy signified to *TKP* an eluding mantra in the series of past betrayals to people. *THT* saw in it shallowness indicative of avoiding the channels of negotiation with parties. *TKP* argued that violent acts questioned CPN-M’s credibility as a party to the pro-democratic alliance. *THT* contended that violence was futile.

Majority of *TKP* editorials of March 2006 raised the issue of violence and repression: human rights violations and blockades by the CPN-M (“Terror Tactic”; “Desist Blockade”) killing of innocent civilians by the security forces (“Sheer Madness”), detention of Madhav Kumar Nepal and Ram Chandra Paudel (“Political Detention”), and involvement of policemen in extortions (“Mend Ways”). A few other issues suggested gradual increase in the anti-regression sentiment. These involved the victory of democratic wings in the Free Students’ Union elections at TU and MSU campuses (“FSU Elections”), Nepal Bar Association’s tenth national conference (“Intoxicating Bar”) and the second SPA-Maoist understanding (“Reinforcing Move”). Meanwhile, the paper reported the government’s attempts at

repressing the press, and national and international efforts to restore press freedom in Nepal (“Camouflaged Repression”). The dissatisfaction of Non-Resident Nepalis Association with the royal government featured in *TKP* as an example of the king’s further isolation (“Diaspora’s Realization”). Most importantly, *TKP* urged the government and the CPN-M to declare “unconditional ceasefire” (“Ceasefire”). At least one editorial noted the visit of Chinese State Councilor, Tang Jiaxuan, to Nepal. *TKP* commented that Tang’s visit was by no means an impetus to the ongoing anti-monarchy sentiment since he indicated support for “reconciliation between the seven-party alliance and the king as propagated by the USA, the EU and India” (“Tang’s Visit”).

*THT* followed a similar line in March. One category of editorials reported cases of violence, threats and suffering. One issue in this category involved incidences of “encounter between security forces and Maoist rebels” at different places at a time some foreigners, especially the US representatives, were advocating alliance between the palace and political parties which, according to the paper, would contribute to more violence (“Missing Magic”). One example of Maoists’ wrongdoings was their warning to SLC examinees of Taplejung not to appear in the examinations, which *THT* reasoned, would “traumatize students” and only prove counter-productive (“Undeserved Penalty”). Then in a flurry of repression against political leadership, the army conducted a raid in the house of Madhav Kumar Nepal. *THT* termed it a “senseless act” (“Daylight Grab”). The paper further lamented the fact that the insurgency had caused great suffering to Nepalis in absence of good governance (“Leave ‘em Alone”). It also remarked that Maoist activities had rather affected the poor, while the rich were untouched by it.

*THT* gave equally significant space to the issues concerning the activities of the regime. These included the king’s consultation with pro-palace leaders (“Back to Square One”), Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey’s emphasis on barring any international peace mediation in Nepal (“Saga of Bad Ideas”), Tulsi Giri’s criticism of the judiciary against the scrapping of the RCCC (“Dead Man Walking”), Minister Radha Krishna Mainali’s assurance for allowing all admit card holders, including even Maoist cadres, to take SLC exams (“Let Them Grow”), and government’s offer of amnesty (with monetary benefits) to Maoist cadres (“Golden Handshake”). Two other subjects that alluded to the government were the misbehavior of NHRC officials

to the relatives of those missing in the insurgency (“The Missing Fields”) and the debate of transparency in the Army Welfare Fund (“On a High Wire”).

In all these representations *THT* assumed a critical posture towards the regime. The paper saw little meaning in king’s consultations with his own supporters as there was “rather a need of a dialogue with Maoists.” Minister Pandey’s rejection of international mediation implied more military operation and deaths of more Nepalis. Tulsi Giri’s dissatisfaction with the judiciary only reflected the government’s contempt for the 1990 Constitution. The offer of amnesty to Maoists would be of little help since only falterers, but not diehard cadres, would be tempted to withdraw from the party. In the same way, NHRC officials’ mistreatment of the relatives of the ones disappeared during the armed insurgency was the crime of double victimization liable to be punished. The transparency debate in Army Welfare Fund reflected embezzlements by the RNA officials and their non-cooperation to the court and, therefore was a subject for “stern action.” The only incidence that *THT* took with some positive light was Minister Mainali’s decision to allow Maoist cadres to take SLC exams. It was positive in that academic opportunity would encourage the young people, who had joined the Maoist army, to return to more productive social life.

The curiosity of international actors about Nepal was of equal merit to *THT*. The paper criticized US President Bush’s remarks during his visit to India that the Nepali king would have to open dialogue with political parties and force the CPN-M to stop violence. It contended that this prescription for Maoists’ untimely surrender was an unrealistic formula (“Faces of Eve”). The paper also reported Bush to have been echoed by Donald Camp, US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, in his reiteration of the stance that the palace and political parties had to “bury their hatchets” and the Maoists had to renounce violence, which was a formula “unhelpful” for Nepal (“Come Dance with Me”). Even Chinese State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan’s suggestion for collaboration among constitutional forces meant similar prescription of excluding the CPN-M from the ongoing peace process. It was to *THT* an unhelpful remedy, at least in the sense that the palace and the parties were the then constitutional forces, while the CPN-M was at war with the establishment (“Lunch with Friends”).

Two relatively neutral suggestions by foreigners surfaced at the same time, which *THT* noted with emphasis. The first was the advice of Gunther Baechler, special advisor to Swiss Government for Peace Building in Nepal, who reportedly



emphasized the need of third party facilitation in Nepal's peace process and spoke of a "feasibility of a political solution in Nepal" through a "process-oriented and non-interventionist" third party mediation. *THT* endorsed Baechler's idea as a more realistic view than that of any foreigner ("Door in the Wall"). The paper also considered the suggestion of Russian Chief Justice VM Lebedev about using laws as "tools for democracy" helpful for building an efficient, independent and fearless judiciary in Nepal ("Candid Counsel").

Apart from the aforesaid categorical issues, *THT* editorialized a number of significant developments. It reported the election of Free Students Union at TU and MSU campuses, and remarked that the election results showed a substantial leftist orientation among students. Unlike *TKP*'s congratulatory notes, *THT* passed a didactic urge to the university students that they should help "promote competitive academic environment" and take care of "national and other duties with their scholastic duty" ("Don't Get Lost"). *THT* welcomed the second understanding between the SPA and CPN-M as an "anti-establishment convergence," which would be stronger in the days ahead and that a "credible initiative for a dialogue with SPA and Maoists" was the only "sane course" for the government ("Dissent Is Democracy"). Another issue of currency the paper discussed was Nepal's foreign policy, as mired in "conflicting attitudes of those in and out of power." The paper viewed that foreign policy "should be judged in terms of its success in protecting "sovereignty and territorial integrity" and in "generation of international goodwill" ("Retired Recollections"). The subject had relevance for the time when international overture and presence had crucial value in shaping political attitudes in Nepal.

Meanwhile, the International Advocacy Group for Press Freedom in Nepal, at a press conference after completion of its eight-day visit to the country, stated that media situation had not at all improved in Nepal and that journalists were facing greater threat due to imposition of more suppressive media ordinances. *THT* frowned at the government arguing that the "unelected bunch in the government" had no right to "sit in judgement" of media and decide on the nature of rewards and punishment, and that the government had proved itself an enemy to press freedom in Nepal ("After All These Months"). *THT*'s open castigation of the government was also depicted in the case of Home Minister Kamal Thapa's threat to "brand all political parties terrorists" since they had signed agreement with the Maoists. Alluding to RPP president Pashupati Shamsher's tirades against Thapa for the latter's warnings, *THT*

claimed that the government's idea of democracy was "not shared by people and the international community." The paper also warned the government not to play double-standard, but be definitive either by restoring the constitution or by scrapping it "instead of acting hypocritically" ("High Noon High").

The political mood in March, as reflected in the editorials of both papers, indicated heightened confrontation between the palace and the political fronts in the days ahead. In reality, there was a visible surge of anti-establishment forces, which was first embodied in the results of the Free Students Union elections and then in the second pact between the SPA and CPN-M. Notably, both papers presented sustained critical tone towards the government. However, *TKP* kept castigating the Maoists also for their continued atrocities and, at the same time, advised them to mend ways to earn the credibility of a party to pro-democratic alliance. *THT* sounded more acerbic to the government, especially towards the end of March, and was mildly cautionary about the Maoists in that they were now an inevitable component of the peace process. Selective inclusion of counter-rhetorical subjects constituted the main rhetorical line of both the papers. The king and his men, mainly Tulsi Giri, Kamal Thapa and Ramesh Nath Pandey, featured in a negative light as earlier. Any representatives of the US government appeared opposed to the mainstream sentiment by stressing palace-parties equation against the SPA-Maoist agreements of November and March.

The first week of April before the protests started appeared to have seen a few incidents in continuation of the mood of the earlier times, and not apparently indicative of the historic 19 days. For example, *TKP*'s April 3 editorial castigated the RNA and the Maoists for attacking schools and warned both sides of possible prosecution in the International Criminal Court for targeting schools and children ("Schools in Pain"). Similarly, *THT*'s editorial of the same day reported an incident of bomb explosion at an SLC examination center in Dailekh district. *THT* asked Maoists to clarify their position at a time the perpetrator of the incident was not identified ("Why They, Why?"). It gave no inkling of the imminent protests. The April 4 editorial of *THT* raised a relatively less political critique of Suryanath Upadhyaya, chief of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority, who had said that donors were not working transparently in Nepal ("Don't Wail, Act"). The second of the paper's April 4 editorial discussed the effect of Maoist insurgency, the "conflict-related psychological trauma," on the general people. The paper demanded that the

psychology of gunmen, especially of the policemen and soldiers, be investigated for records of indiscriminate killings (“The Wild Bunch”).

In the April 5 editorial, *TKP* deplored the secret amendment of the Terrorist and Disruptive Ordinance (TADO) calling it a reflection of the regime’s “suspicious intent” to punish the advocates of change and freedom (“A Meaner TADO”). The amendment had come in the eve of the four-day strike announced by the SPA to which the CPN-M had promised to lend peaceful support. The ordinance’s implication at this juncture, *TKP* claimed, was that the government could punish any dissenter in the charge of terrorist intent, and that it was ready to exert any measure in resistance and suppression of the ensuing protests. The April 5 text of *THT* pointed at the impending four-day strikes, in support of which the CPN-M had announced ceasefire in the Kathmandu valley. The paper reported of the government taking “more uncompromising direction” by intensifying arrests of political leaders and their cadres (“Cat on a Hot Tin Roof”). Similarly, *THT* editorial of April 6 warned of the widening divergence between the palace and the people, and of the government’s aggressive mood. The paper stressed that peace was more a necessity in the country than anyone’s choice (“A Necessity, Period”). Thus, right in the eve of the protests the two papers signaled a foreboding of confrontation between the pro-democratic protestors and the government.

### **Movement Exigencies**

The period of 19 days in April merits substantive discussion in the study of the movement. The period marked heightened exigencies that saw unparalleled convergence of people against the royal regime. The convergence forced king Gyanendra to retire from active politics after restoring the House of Representatives to political parties to carry out their roadmap for peace. With the reinstatement of the House, all former counter-rhetorical agents such as the royalist ministers went out of the mainstream discourse. The following section presents a day-wise description of the editorial coverage of each paper from 7 to 25 April 2006. My purpose is to help build the chronology of the events during the movement which, in other words, is to establish a clear sense of what exactly happened during the historic nineteen days.

In its April 7 editorial, on the first day of strike, *TKP* censured the imposition of curfew against the movement and predicted, “the regime will not sustain for long.” The paper wondered whether the royal government was bent upon converting the

whole country into a curfew state (“Curfew State”). *TKP* also claimed that the government’s days were numbered at the rise and intensity of agitation and the defiance of curfew by the protestors. The same day, *THT* noted the concerns of UN General Secretary Kofi Annan regarding Nepal’s human rights situation. It wrote that the royal government, with the use of excessive force, was killing two birds with a single arrow – harassing the parties who were agitating for democracy, and countering Maoist ‘terrorism.’ *THT* claimed that aggression on the part of government would “deepen the instability further” (“Fire in the Lake”).

On April 10, the day after the four-day strike ended and the SPA announced fresh protest programs pledging to continue the agitation till the restoration of democracy, *TKP* declared, “King Gyanendra cannot fulfill his desire to become an absolute Monarch” (“On the Threshold”). On its part, *THT* highlighted the SPA’s resolution to continue strikes in the backdrop of the increasing participation of people including professionals. The paper further acknowledged the concern of the international community on the aggressive situation, but admitted that the fire of agitation would continue since the SPA movement had gone beyond cadre-based agitation (“The Making of Sense”). Thus, *THT* constructed the mood of the time as aggressive, uncertain and suggestive of more violent collisions in the ensuing days. On April 11, with visible disdain for the brutal use of force by security forces that had caused three deaths till then, *TKP* stressed that no one was above the law and the king who was so unrelenting towards people’s demands for democracy could never be called a divine figure (“Stop Brutality”). *THT* lampooned the restriction of curfew passes to media houses and journalists and insisted that the government “must not dictate the media” and had “no right to deny curfew passes to established media houses” (“Singing in the Rain”).

The April 12 editorial of *TKP* dismissed Home Minister Kamal Thapa’s claim of Maoist infiltration in the SPA movement. The paper argued that if Maoist cadres had joined the movement peacefully, there was no point in making fuss; they were as rightful to fight regression as any Nepali citizens. *TKP* charged the government of practicing infiltration by sending “plaincloth-armymen” to agitate mass gatherings in Banke district (“Whose Infiltration?”). The same day’s commentary in *THT* went on to report the political agitation and curfews and their impact on the economy leading to “unstable investment climate.” *THT* hinted that only Information Technology

would remain as an unaffected field, but the hope for a better economy in general was “unrealistic” (“Unrealistic Hope”).

On April 13 *TKP* protested SSP Madhav Thapa’s atrocities, his act of gauging the eye of a protestor at a medical station in Gongabu. The editorial lamented that only a psychiatrist would define the mental status of the torturers like Madhab Thapa (“Set Record Straight”). *THT* also criticized the excessive suppression of the movement by the security forces. It reported that the government had been criticized by the USA and other countries, and that the regime had been under pressure both from inside and beyond. The day’s conclusion, as before, was: “The threshold is getting wider.” And the government would have to “make solid initiatives” (“Don’t Look Back”). On the same day, the second editorial of *THT* resented the police battering of one of its Biratnagar-based correspondents. The paper termed it “abhorrent act,” and disapproved of the government’s “riding roughshod over media persons.” It also passed an alarm to the government: “Any effort to muzzle the press with muscle power is simply unacceptable” (“You Are No Good”).

The April 14 editorial of *TKP* contained its New Year message. This went thus: “Though no one is in a mood to celebrate the New Year, we can at least pledge to fight against the autocratic regime till the restoration of democracy” (“New Year”). But *THT* gave no hint of celebration, nor any message of pledge. It rather declared the royal regime a fiasco. The paper as well contended, “As long as the inevitability of democracy is denied, there cannot be any hope for a return of peace, and the government cannot resist the rising tide of protestors from eventually overwhelming it” (“Love Me Tender”). This illustrates that the political and security situation by then had deteriorated amidst growing public participation, and the government had maintained heavy reliance on force.

On April 15 *TKP* commented on the king’s New Year address to the nation, in which he had signaled keeping the royal door open for a dialogue with the parliamentary parties. *TKP* contended that it was almost too late for the king’s overture because the people “no longer need the royal door open” (“King’s Open Door”). Similarly, *TKP*’s April 17 editorial acclaimed the establishment of relief fund by artistes Madan Krishna Shrestha and Haribansa Acharya at Kathmandu Model Hospital. *TKP* called it a symbolic assurance of a large section of population fighting for “sovereign rights together” (“Protestors’ Fund”). The same day, *THT* expressed concern on the country’s deteriorating political situation and urged the parties in

conflict, especially the regime, “to demonstrate statesmanship.” The paper demanded, “A bold and comprehensive approach to a political settlement seems to be the only right move and it must come from the king – soon” (“No Ordinary Time”). Another editorial the same day marked a sense of despair, noting that Kathmandu valley was “reeling under an acute shortage of essential commodities” due to continued strikes (“Litmus Test”). Price hike and black-marketing had risen while the government showed no concern towards people’s hardships. Hence *THT*’s challenge: “Does the government have any moral right to continue in power?”

A comment on “prominence of foreign powers in Nepali politics” featured in *TKP*’s April 18 editorial in connection with the king’s consultations with envoys of the USA, China and India. The paper reminded that no matter what the consultations involved, the main agenda for the time was the “question of the sovereignty of the people” (“Envoys’ Message”). *THT* wrote about king’s consultation with Dr. Tulsi Giri and Kirtinidhi Bista, the two vice chairs in his cabinet, and the ambassadors of the USA, India and China (“Angle of Repose”). The paper further contended that despite any number of consultations, and regardless of what the consultations were about, “what is crucial is finding the answer to the problem based on a national consensus.” The royalist ministers’ insensitivity towards the situation “may compromise the survivability of monarchy,” the paper further cautioned.

*TKP*’s April 19 editorial reported the civil servants from the Singh Durbar premises to have lent solidarity to the movement. To *TKP*, this was the evidence of the regime’s gradual crumbling (“Turning Point”). *THT* wrote about the king’s political consultations with former prime ministers Krishna Prashad Bhattarai, leader of NC, and Surya Bahadur Thapa, chairman of Rashtriya Janashakti Party. The paper commented that Bhattarai, who had suggested the king the reactivation of 1990 Constitution and publicly voiced his stance for constitutional monarchy, had proved himself “outdated” by being “not in touch with reality.” Likewise, Thapa’s ideological leaning, which was not necessarily pro-movement but suggestively neutral, would not be contributory, either. The paper rather urged the king to demonstrate statesmanship by hearing the demands of the people in the streets because the institution he represented stood to lose if he did not act immediately by “respecting the popular will” (“The Age of Change”).

A sense of imminent political transformation featured in *TKP*’s April 20 editorial on the role of India in Nepal’s politics, now embodied in the visit of Karan

Singh, a senior leader of Indian National Congress party. The paper sent a welcome note to Singh's consultation with the king provided this were an overture to "strengthen the *Loktantrik* movement" ("Crucial Support"). The same day, both of *THT* editorials discussed the urgency for political change in the country. The first mentioned the pressure given to the government by international rights-based organizations against the exceeding use of violence upon the protestors. The text reiterated that the respect for monarchy was getting remote and people were very likely to renounce it completely. While the ministers, who had earlier voiced stringent commitment to the king's roadmap, had now "fallen silent" perhaps because they had "finally seen the writing on the wall," the wisest course for the regime was to stop the excessive use of force and to protect its remaining image ("Better Now than Never"). The second editorial restated the repercussions of the strikes in Kathmandu – acute shortage of drinking water and medicine and collection of garbage ("Living Dangerously"). *THT* grumbled that the government bodies were indifferent towards resolving the crises, so were the common people in taking visible initiatives.

On April 21, *TKP* lamented the worsening political deadlock caused by the king's adamancy. The king's unrelenting stance simply reflected the attitude of all the erstwhile rulers of Nepal who had denied people sovereignty ("Time's Run Out"). *TKP* noted that the country had already seen 14 deaths and 7 disappearances ever since the protests started, but that the tempo of the movement was ever increasing. The paper's April 22 commentary reported mass encircling of Kathmandu's Ring Road by the protestors the day before, an evidence of unprecedented convergence against the regime ("People's Power"). On April 24, *TKP* wrote on the king's April 21 address to the nation, in which he had invited the SPA leaders to nominate a consensus prime minister. *TKP* expressed dissatisfaction with the international community for their attempt to persuade the SPA leaders to accept the king's offer ("Int'l Community"). *TKP* was in favor of the protestors who were in the street not to win premiership for a particular leader but to establish complete democracy in the country. In the April 24 editorial, *THT* also analyzed the king's April 21 address. The paper's main concern was the foreign diplomats' attempt at persuading parties to accept the king's offer to appoint a consensus prime minister ("Ameliorative Approach"). The paper marked that the diplomats converging around party leaders the day following the royal address was "not a good sight at all," and their efforts were "out of sync" with the reality. The democratic countries in that sense were suggesting

a denial of the constituent assembly, a democratic right of Nepalis for which they were now staking their lives in the streets.

*TKP*'s April 25 editorial urged the CPN-M to declare ceasefire on the ground that the movement had already shown more people in favor of bringing change through peaceful means; the Maoists' armed tactics had already been invalidated by the mass uprising ("Ceasefire!"). On April 25, *THT* showed two options to the king: resort to more brutality or restore the House of Representatives ("The Forgotten Frontier"). The restoration could be done by the Supreme Court than directly by the king's decree. The paper also reported the SPA's plan to bring two million people to the Ring Road. This was going to be the largest convergence ever since the protests began, and right after the parties had turned down the royal offer of premiership. Another April 25 editorial covered the "Bandha fatigue," again ("Grim Scenario"). There was shortage of petroleum in Kathmandu; the crisis had paralyzed daily life. Thus, the intensity of protests, coupled with acute material crises, told of the urgency for an early dénouement.

Thus, both *TKP* and *THT* gave extended coverage to the movement. But their individual focuses slightly differed. While *TKP* continued to assume involvement by totally castigating the government atrocities and deploring Maoist violence, *THT* maintained the posture of an omniscient observer. *TKP*'s eyes were mostly directed to the streets, in the activities of the political parties and the security forces. *THT* diversified its scrutiny from streets to the lives of general people, especially by reporting the fallouts of the movement. *TKP* remained visibly sharp at predicting the fall of the regime. *THT* alternated its predictions between the regime's fall and a potential broad-based solution which included all the parties in conflict – the palace, the parliamentary parties and the CPN-M.

The editorials revealed interesting difference in terms of prioritizing the exigencies right before and during the movement. While the amendment of TADO early April, which reflected the government's intention for hard retaliation during the four-day strike and beyond, featured in *TKP*, *THT* preferred covering Surya Nath Upadhyaya's grumbles about the lack of transparency in donor agencies' activities in Nepal. *TKP* acclaimed the establishment of the protestors' fund by Madan Krishna and Haribansa, an initiative of crucial significance, which *THT* simply excluded. *THT* reported the concerns of international bodies about the excessive use of force, whereas *TKP* lent its own judgement about the psychology of the security forces.



Similarly, Karan Singh's meeting with the king marked for *TKP* an example of India's crucial support to Nepal, while *THT* did not make it a part of its editorial. *THT* wrote one full editorial featuring Krishna Prashad Bhattarai for his 'outdated' prescription of constitutional monarchy, *TKP* did not editorialize Bhattarai's consultations with the king. Finally, while *THT* described the impact of the prolonged strikes and protests on the country's economy in general and in the life of Kathmandu in particular, *TKP* remained silent about such pressing reality.

Both papers covered at least two specific issues with identical critical force on April 18 and April 24. These included king's consultations with envoys of the USA, China and India, and foreign diplomats' pressure on the SPA to accept the king's April 21 overtures. *TKP* found in the consultations the prominence of foreign powers in Nepal's internal affairs during a heightened crisis. *THT* regarded them literally non-contributory to resolving the crisis in that the cue of solution lay in the attitude of the parties in conflict, especially the king, in responding the voice of the mass in the streets. *TKP* regarded the diplomats' pro-palace activism as "unsatisfactory role of the international community." *THT* deemed it their inability to comprehend the voices in the street as well as their blatant disregard for Nepalis' demands for sovereignty.

### **Post-Movement Exigencies**

The mass protests ended around the midnight of April 24 when King Gyanendra addressed the nation proclaiming the reinstatement of the House of Representatives dissolved on 22 May 2002. The editorial commentaries on the proclamation and the end of the protests came in both *TKP* and *THT* only on April 26. On its part, with a note of celebration for the restoration of the House, *TKP* urged the SPA to become more responsible in the days ahead. It reported that the movement had ended with 16 deaths, 9 missing and 5 thousands injured. *TKP* asked the SPA leaders to take action against those who suppressed the peaceful movement, to provide relief to the sufferers and consider equally honoring the Maoists' martyrs. The paper asserted that people anticipated the SPA to "make the moves that will help restore peace and the dignity of the people," and emphasized the need to "recognize the martyrs and treat the injured properly" as "the most important step at this juncture" ("Martyr's Rights").

*THT* also welcomed the royal proclamation. It termed the restoration of the House the "victory of all Nepalis." At the same time, the paper cautioned the SPA

about their main challenges ahead, which involved “a tortuous path towards constituent assembly and beyond,” and the task of “heralding a new dawn of total democracy, peace, prosperity” and ensuring the “unity and uniqueness of the nation” (“New Dawn”). Similarly, *THT* urged the victorious SPA to give respect to the martyrs and all brave protestors, and at the same time to listen to the CPN-M and integrate its agenda by making constituent assembly the immediate goal.

The first post-movement editorials above suffice to set a scene for the ensuing discourses. The earlier villain persona of the regressive government is essentially replaced by new hero personae of the SPA and SPA-led government at the helm of leadership. The government was to set all forward-looking agendas and make and promulgate decisions through the newly restored House, the only sovereign body to proclaim all necessary formal changes. The palace was not the main actor at this time, nor any of its former accomplices, but was referred to as a subject to criticism as well as of penalty. The main actors of the foregone regime were termed liable to be penalized for their regressive, villainous acts during the king’s rule and the nineteen-day mass protests. The agenda ahead was naturally about moving forward, about making progress towards establishing complete democracy through the constituent assembly, as both papers signaled in their April 26 editorials.

The editorials commonly note at least eleven very important events signifying a progress in Nepal’s politics in the post-movement phase. Following the appointment of Girija Prasad Koirala as a consensus prime minister of the SPA, the House passed a resolution of holding constituent assembly elections. Meanwhile a six-member council of ministers came into being, which announced ceasefire (in response to the ceasefire already announced by the CPN-M) and withdrew the terrorist tag and red corner notices put upon the Maoist leaders by the former governments. Then the government formed a five-member judicial Commission headed by former SC Justice Krishna Jang Rayamajhi to investigate the cases of atrocity during the nineteen-day movement. The formation of the Rayamajhi Commission followed immediate annulling of political appointments and suspension of security chiefs except that of the RNA. Meanwhile, the government also scrapped six crucial ordinances imposed by the royal government.

Furthermore, both the government and the CPN-M announced their teams for imminent bilateral talks. At the same time Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Finance Minister in the new government, presented a White Paper to the parliament exposing the

irregularities of 3.17 billion rupees on non-budgetary expenditure by the royal government. Two crucial events followed. The House made a historic proclamation – of snatching all executive authorities from the king, declaring itself the sole sovereign body and turning the country a secular state, among a number of other changes. Then a high-level negotiation between the government and the CPN-M brought forth a 25-point ceasefire code of conduct, which set priorities for managing arms, monitoring the peace process and holding the elections of constituent assembly.

These all developments evidence the post-movement phase to have become visibly progressive. The papers, on their parts, appeared to have identical thrusts in their thematic priorities to the post-movement happenings, as well in the coverage of other exigencies as in the aforesaid developments. Both alternated their tones perceptibly between moralizing, criticizing and endorsing. For instance, they were didactic in cases when the parties dillydallied in the main agendas of nation-building, such as accelerating the peace process and moving towards constituent assembly. They were critical when the parties deliberately chose a retarding course, like refraining from penalizing the defaulters of erstwhile regime or continuing military operations even in the wake and mid of peace negotiations. And the papers endorsed progressive agendas brought forth by the SPA and the CPN-M. The paragraphs to follow shed more lights on these didactic, critical and approving positions taken by the post-movement editorials.

A number of *TKP* editorials were instructive in their focus to the future undertakings of the SPA and SPA-led government. At least four representative subjects in this line suggested certain moral directions to the new government. The first concerned the question of dealing with the supporters of the erstwhile regime. *TKP* stressed that the government should be ingenuous in dealing with the supporters of the erstwhile regime; it should distinguish the harmless supporters of the royal regime such as the “misguided-but- untainted people” from those “who abused authority and embezzled state treasury and other state-run funds” (“Show Tolerance”). Second, the paper prioritized the urgency to maintain law and order and at the same time to “make moves to accommodate the Maoists” towards holding the election to constituent assembly. *TKP* expressed impatience at the SPA’s delay in forming the government, due to a simple confusion about the modes of oath-taking by the prime minister. Amid other more pressing issues, *TKP* did not see much sense in

the debate on oath-taking, and suggested doing it in the parliament on the ground that it would “deliver huge psychological blow to the reactionaries” (“Warning Bell”).

Third, *TKP* wrote on the fact that Chitra Lekha Yadav, the Deputy Speaker of the newly restored House, was denied the Speaker’s position. The paper claimed of her being “undeniably the first choice of the majority of the people,” and praised her for declining the position of the Minister for Water Resources. It called her stance justifiable in that it proved her commitment to “value-based politics than grabbing the power to make quick bucks” (“Exemplary Move”). The fourth issue that indicated a moral responsibility on the new leadership concerned the utilization of 20.8 million rupees collected in the *Jana Andolan* Primary Health Care Fund. *TKP* underlined a possibility of using the money as mandatorily in the treatment of the injured as in providing free education to the children of the injured and the martyrs. The paper also suggested using part of the fund in the “welfare of the victims of natural disasters” (“People’s Fund”).

The *THT* editorials that were didactic in their stances covered a wider range of pertinent issues. The foremost concern in this respect was the urgency of “constant vigilance and application of pressure to push for strings-free constituent assembly.” *THT* cautioned that the Maoist rebels were not happy about the restoration of the House and that the SPA was now bound to make swift response to the “Maoist tripod of political conference, interim government and constituent assembly.” This is to say, the right course for the SPA was to push for outcome-oriented actions” (“Outcome’s the Key”). Similarly, *THT* took the case of the overtures from the CPN-M like lifting the blockades and announcing ceasefire, and urged for an immediate reciprocation by the government. Moreover, the paper demanded the ouster of those who suppressed the pro-democratic movement arguing that not showing door to such people would “insult the people’s feeling expressed through the *Jana Andolan*” (“No Riding Again”). In the same vein, *THT* pointed that the resolution of the House for constituent assembly had posed more responsibility on the government. The paper postulated, “While the government has at once the noble and daunting task of holding the CA polls, the alliance partners should take special care that they do not become embroiled in petty quarrels and narrow interests” (“The Bull’s Eye”).

*THT* was equally concerned about the ongoing intra- and inter-party feuds among NC, NC-D and CPN-UML over ministerial portfolios, which had delayed the formation of the government. *THT* reminded the parties that general people had

begun to wonder about parties' "bickering over the loaves and fishes of office" and to question whether they had felt the need to change "despite four years of buffeting" they received from the king ("Old Habits Die Hard"). The paper regarded it "ironical" that the parties "entrusted with steering the country" through the giant task of constituent assembly were "pettifogging over cabinet berths and showing a deficiency of democratic character in dealing with party matters." It was in fact a crucial time for the parties to "repair their eroded public credibility," for which they were rather expected to reflect enough learning from the past ("Lessons Not Learnt"). *THT* further advised the "Koirala-led government" not to "waste too much of the precious time and energy over administrative wrangling" but to "engage in high-level thinking surrounding major national issues." The paper suggested the ministers "to concentrate on important matters of state affairs rather than in seminars and other ribbon-cutting exercises." In fact, the government was "working in no ordinary times," and, therefore, had to "demonstrate extraordinary courage" in that it was faced with "extraordinary challenges" ("Call It Courage").

More than half a dozen other subjects *THT* editorialized depicted the urgency for the government and the SPA leaders to act wisely and cautiously. Four of the editorials took such issues as eruption of violence in Kathmandu, economic crunch faced by the Maoist militia, security lapse in the Kathmandu valley, and Danish Ambassador's confirmation to provide Nepal 2 to 5 billion rupees for the peace process and 1.5 billion for promotion of rural energy. One reason for the eruption of violence was reportedly Sher Bahadur Deuba's proposal to make the king the Commander-in-chief "sans uniform." *THT* regarded such incidences to result from the fact that leaders were "wasting valuable time on wrangling over petty matters, instead of grappling with issues of greater significance to the nation." In this connection, the paper urged the leaders to "display a higher sense of responsibility and concentrate in constructive nation-building efforts" ("Summer of Swans"). On the issue of financial crisis in the Maoist militia, *THT* took a strong stance. It warned the parties and the government not to beg for or redirect any foreign aid to help the Maoists unless the "decommissioning" of their "illegal weaponry" was completed "prior to going to the polls for constituent assembly" ("Over the Rainbow").

Similarly, regarding the dwindling security situation in Kathmandu, *THT* advised the government to effectively mobilize the "law enforcement and state security agencies." It reminded the government to tackle lawlessness "by bringing the

culprits to book” and to ensure protection to citizens so that the upcoming peace talks would make desired difference (“Let’s Feel Safe”). In response to the Danish Ambassador’s offer of aid, the paper recalled Nepal’s past experiences in which “some manipulative politicians, fraudulent non-governmental agencies and so-called do-gooders” had found it “convenient to exploit and embezzle the public funds.” It suggested the government to devise such procedures to “channelize the foreign aid to the intended beneficiaries.” This, as a result, could “keep a check on the credibility and effectiveness of the agencies concerned” (“Boost for Bonanza”).

*THT* wrote about four other relatively less pressing concerns demanding government’s attention. The first involved the necessity to recognize Mohammad Jahangir Khan, an Indian citizen killed in the protests, as a Nepali martyr (“The True Salute”). The second was about providing reasonable share to the marginalized women and dalits, who participated in the historic April Movement (“Point of Order”). The third case was about promoting Nepal’s national interest during Deputy Prime Minister KP Oli’s upcoming participation in Malaysia in the meeting of Non-Aligned Movement (“Time to Change”). The fourth concerned the “uncalled for” split in Rashtriya Jana Morcha at a time “strengthening and uniting” of the parties was required to help flourish the multiparty system (“Friday Night Fever”).

Let us now examine the aspects in which both papers assumed a critical editorial stance in response to the negative elements of the post-movement period. Notably, the papers’ critical stances complement their didactic positions in that moralizing practically underlined criticism or vice versa. In a number of cases discussed above the papers first criticized the main actors and then passed a moral message. The issue of Chitra Lekha Yadav in *TKP* and of inter-party feuds in *THT* exemplify this aspect. What follows is the discussion of the cases in which the papers took emphatically critical positions. In this direction, the main subjects of criticism in both papers were largely common. For example, both *TKP* and *THT* attacked the negative records of the former regime, and the contradictory and subversive acts of the Maoists. But *TKP* was also concerned about the regressive actions of the RNA and ineffective undertakings of the new government. *THT* made no specific remarks about the RNA, and about the government gave no perceptible attention than moralizing in certain issues, as shown above.

*TKP* was bitterly critical about the former regime in the issue of financial irregularities. The paper complained that in its heydays the regime allowed its

“handpicked ministers and the top brass of the security forces” to enjoy “unfettered rights to abuse the state treasury.” Examples included the expenditure on the medical treatment of Hellen Shah, visits of royal couple to Africa and Dhaka, and the expenses by “some Hindu fanatics to woo the illiterates.” The paper argued that with “disastrous economic irregularities” the royal regime had created a “financial mess” which “will take years to clean.” The paper further called those who embezzled state treasury the “anti-nationalists as they disregarded the sovereignty of people as well as the country,” and demanded that they be “tried in courts” (“Misappropriation”). The evidences of the royal regime’s financial misappropriation were revealed in the editorial on the White Paper presented by Finance Minister Mahat. The White Paper exposed the irregularities of 3.17 billion rupees on non-budgetary expenditure. *TKP*, however, voiced an ameliorative measure unlike in the previous editorial. It stressed the need to “debate the economic policies that would be owned by all the participants in the government” and the Maoists who were soon to join. The actual need of the time, the paper emphasized, was to create an environment to “boost investors’ confidence and economic stability” (“White Paper”).

At least two instances featured RNA’s negative persona. The first was the killing of six civilians in Belbari of Morang district just a few days after the end of the mass movement. *TKP* voiced for the formation of an independent investigation body to probe into the killing; it demanded trying the culprits in a civilian court instead of the military court in that the RNA top brass could not be trusted to penalize the defaulters (“Belbari Massacre”). The second case involved the RNA’s “aerial attack on Maoists’ peaceful mass meeting in Nawalparasi” in which “few houses of the local people were damaged” and “some unarmed civilians were hurt.” *TKP* branded the act as an “unwarranted attempt to drag the rebels into the war” during the ongoing peace process, and cautioned the RNA that “conducting aerial raids and firing indiscriminately at the mass meeting” would only “escalate violence and distance the Maoist rebels” (“RNA Raid”).

*TKP* criticized the Maoists in at least four cases. The first case involved the upsurge of the Maoist-affiliated trade union, All Nepal Trade Union Federation (ANTUF), which had “taken the country’s business for a ride.” The paper reported the closure of “two-thirds of the small and medium size industries” ever since the Maoist insurgency started. Thus, *TKP* asked the Maoists to realize that what they had been advocating about rights and well-being of workers was “destroying the country’s

fragile economy.” The paper also appealed the government to “take the Maoist activity seriously” because they had “acted against the 12-point pact” (“Jungle Raj”). Second, the paper noted ambiguous and provocative acts of the CPN-M cadres. For example, some Maoists said they would go to jungle, while others planned to “wage a different kind of revolution” if their demands were not met. In the same way, Prachanda was reported to have said he “would have taken action against the King and confiscated all his property.” *TKP* regarded such acts and speeches as causes of anarchy, and advised Prachanda to win public support by stopping “cranking and threatening to raise arms again.” The paper admonished the Maoist supremo thus: “Sorry, Comrade! We don’t believe in any system that talks about curtailing people’s fundamental rights, freedom of expression, and free and fair elections” (“Cranky Maoists”).

Third, *TKP* reported that there were “widespread complaints, both in the House of Representatives and on the streets, about Maoist extortions.” The paper called it “unfortunate” and wondered “why the Maoists are so blind to something so detrimental to their own interest.” *TKP* equally acknowledged the Maoists’ need of money to keep “such a huge war machine going,” but asked them to take a lawful way such as a state-support, already made public by responsible leaders of CPN-UML and NC (“Rebel Extortions”). Likewise, the fourth issue involved the Maoists’ demand for dissolving the House as well as the violation of the code of conduct by them. *TKP* regarded such acts to have caused a “fissure” in the relation between the government and the CPN-M. The proof was that the Maoists had started talking “about formation of republican fronts throughout the country,” and “of establishing autonomous self-governing local bodies without going to election.” Meanwhile, the government mobilized the military in major security posts of Kathmandu. *TKP* wondered what the government meant to convey by security mobilization. And the paper’s message to the Maoists at this point was about showing patience to resolve issues through talks, and about going by “the verdict of the people coming through the ballots” (“Uninvited Fissure”).

Editorials on two other exigencies marked *TKP*’s disapproval of the Maoist actions. The first took the case of the gun attack on Dr. Hemang Dixit, the Principal of Kathmandu Medical College, early May. Though *TKP* attributed the incident to the “criminalization of the society” due the Maoist insurgency in general, it equally suspected Maoist cadres’ involvement in the attack on the ground that “some rebels



are beyond the command of their chairman Prachanda.” *TKP* also asked the CPN-M to “stick to their commitment in order to draw people’s sympathy” and to show the people that they were “willing to join the mainstream politics” (“Peace Talks and Crime”). The second exigency included the “spate of violence” around the country including the burning of 17000 copies of the *Kantipur* daily in Birgunj. *TKP* suspected the involvement of both royalists and the Maoists, and feared “a serious risk of counter-revolution and civil war” emanating from such cases of violence. The paper explained,

The royalist hand is suspected because it would try to play religion card and evoke people’s sentiments. . . . Maoist involvement cannot be ruled out because their aspiration to overrun this government and establish their own overnight has not completely died down. (“Contain Hooliganism”)

One issue for which *TKP* reproached the SPA government concerned the discriminatory implementation of the recommendation of Rayamajhi Commission – suspension of the chiefs of the security bodies except that of the RNA. *TKP* lamented the exemption to RNA saying that the government had “fallen weak in the case of RNA.” But the paper also endorsed the government’s skepticism towards the Maoists, which must have led to its concession to the Army. The paper noted that the parties in the government were not “entirely wrong” because the Maoists had “shown dichotomy in their character.” *TKP* wished that the Maoists “showed more flexible attitude towards democracy and peace” so that the government could take action “against the human rights violators in RNA, without fearing any upheavals.” This could surely help “establish a democratic society, without fearing any coup and counter-coup in the near future” (“Discrimination”).

*THT* raised at least two issues related with the former regime. The first, the White Paper presented by the Finance Minister, was naturally a sensitive case. *THT* marked that the White Paper had “revealed the country’s precarious economic health” and at the same time “exposed how those at the helm of the erstwhile regime misused the national coffers on unproductive expenditure like foreign trips, with the most offensive of them all, to control (read crush) the *Jana Andolan*.” Yet, the paper cautioned “those at the helm [of the present government]” to realize that vendetta would boomerang. *THT* was against the notion that “those with, money muscle and

clout should not be docked and deterred.” Its own line was about “finding out ways of making the guilty accountable for every paisa of the tax-payers’ hard-earned money and every single dollar of the international donor funnelled thus far as developmental aid.” Also, it urged the government to lay down a “strong foundation for good governance and economic prosperity” and to “give the culture of corruption an unsung burial” (“Here We Go Again”).

The second issue involved the then Chief Justice Dilip Kumar Paudel’s strategy to evade impeachment. At a time a number of parliament members were demanding his resignation, Paudel instead demanded resignation of the ad hoc judge (appointed by the former regime) Pawan Kumar Jha. He tried to “persuade” the lawyers of Nepal Bar Association to “urge politicians not to impeach him.” *THT* remarked that Paudel had “sought a political horse-trading to save the two years of his remaining judicial tenure . . .” The paper further underlined, “Given the circumstance he is in, Paudel would do himself, and the entire judiciary, a service by heeding the call of the MPs. The sooner, the better” (“Smart Idea”).

*THT* wrote about three important subjects concerning the Maoists, all explaining their provocative attitude. The first took the fact that the Maoists had continued extortions even when the peace talks were in the offing. While chairman Prachanda had accused *Mandales* of carrying out extortions “in the name of Maoists” some “Maoist functionaries” were claiming that the party “would not stop activities like collection of donations and tax and interrogation” till an interim government with their involvement was formed. In this connection, *THT* contended, “The rebels cannot talk of regional good governance and reconstruction of state if their old methods of looting, killings and extortions are carried out with impunity.” The paper urged the CPN-M to assist the government “for giving permanency to peace and stability” and to stop the “activities like extortions in time as critical as the current one” (“Forsake Rigidity”).

Second, *THT* lamented that the Maoists were not changing with the time. They had not “mended their old ways” but continued their negative activities “against the spirit of the 12-point agreement.” One case, also raised by *TKP* above, entailed the activities of their trade union, ANTUF. *THT* particularly asked CPN-M chairman Prachanda to “desist from making explosive statements” such as his warning that “his men would not hesitate to take up arms again if the government repressed his cadres.” The paper clarified that no one was in fact demanding punishment to the Maoists but

asking them to “resist the temptation of dictating terms for talks or something else” that were “likely to vitiate climate for constituent assembly elections.” The CPN-M’s positive commitment was all the more important at a time when every political exercise needed to be “directed towards fulfilling the goals of the *Jana Andolan* – to create a sound, solid, cohesive, and all-inclusive nation” (“Promises to Keep”).

Third, the paper disowned the Maoists’ “outrageous demand” for the dissolution of the House and endorsed the SPA leaders’ rejection of their demand. The paper purported, “The onus now rests on the radical comrades to honestly reciprocate the official gesture by immediately putting an end to all their subversive activities such as extortion and intimidation.” The paper further contended that there could be “no room for subverting the democratic process to serve personal ends or the political agenda of an individual or a group of individuals.” In the same way, the “inflammatory statements and atrocious demands” of the Maoists “should not obstruct the process of bringing them into the political mainstream,” and at the same time the SPA should not concede to their demand of House dissolution only to “lead to a political vacuum, offering an invite to the reactionary forces to walk in and create mischief.” *THT* further asserted, “No point underplaying the glorious movement that restored democracy. Establishing new Nepal is, and so has to be, the priority of all irrespective of their affiliation and ideology” (“Work Now, Fight Later”).

Let us now examine the editorials which recorded progress and made approving yet cautionary gestures towards the related events and actors. I first bring here at least four exigencies which both *TKP* and *THT* documented with emphasis. These included, chronologically, the formation of the Rayamajhi Commission and its fallouts, the scrapping of various ordinances promulgated by the former regime, the historic proclamation by the House of Representatives and the signing of the ceasefire code of conduct. My purpose, literally, is to portray the aspects where the two papers appeared to converge with identical gesture of endorsement.

*TKP* held formation of the Rayamajhi Commission as a step forward to “book the culprits to justice.” It suggested that the commission added an important responsibility to the government, which was to facilitate the investigation. This, foremost, was to suspend the heads of the security institutions and the Chief Secretary, otherwise “nobody in the security forces or outside [would] dare to speak out the truth to the commission” (“Judicial Commission”). Similarly, *THT* termed the formation of the Commission a move to make the “transition into CA and beyond

smooth.” The paper suggested the government to do “much more to reverse the regressive decisions of the past and remove existing obstructions” and not to let the guilty “escape unscathed.” *THT* showed the urgency to suspend the oppressors of the people’s movement “with prima facie evidence of going out of the way” even before the Rayamajhi Commission’s report arrived (“Time for Justice”). Such action would discourage the guilty from using their official authority to influence the commission’s work.

*TKP* welcomed the new government’s announcement that the laws against press freedom introduced by the earlier regime would be scrapped. This is where *TKP* claimed of a crucial role of independent media during the April Movement. The paper at the same time advised the government to privatize all state-owned media for “reinforcing independent media to uphold freedom, peace and democracy” (“Govt and Media”). *THT* revealed the government’s decision to scrap six ordinances including Media Ordinance, Local Administration Ordinance and Social Welfare Ordinance. The paper explained that the process of “review, revision and annulment” had come as a part of the SPA’s commitment for change or “in response to public sentiment or the lobbying of those concerned” (“Refreshing Rollback”). This was the evidence that the Alliance-led government was clearing hurdles and heading to complete its mission for complete democracy.

*TKP* hailed 18 May 2006, the day when the House made the proclamation on its own sovereignty, as a historic day. The “clipping of the wings of the king,” “scrapping of the Royal Council and royal secretariat,” and imposition of taxes on the income of the royal family marked the main achievements of the proclamation among a number of other radical decisions. The paper wrote, optimistically, “The country is onto the right track of healing the wounds of insurgency. It is going to emerge soon as a harmonious, peaceful, democratic and fast developing country” (“Sovereign House”). On its part, *THT* welcomed the House declaration as an event “in sync with popular aspirations” and “a turning point in the history of Nepal” for “underscoring the significance of the sovereign people’s power.” The paper remarked that the proclamation declared the formal end of the Shah dynasty as the “custodian of the nation’s power and the centuries of legacy it had embodied.” It also showed the need of “visionary leaders” ahead who could “look beyond parochial and sectarian interest” at a time “bad politics” had retarded the nation’s development. *THT* further registered that people’s expectation from the SPA and the CPN-M was to “channelize their

energies in consolidation of the gains of the *Jana Andolan*” (“Hail to People”). The consolidation would prevent the political system from further decline and evade the repetition of an unpleasant history.

The last common subject the papers covered was the 25-point Code of Conduct signed between the government and the CPN-M on 25 May 2006. *TKP* welcomed it as an agreement “to monitor and govern the truce and to create a conducive environment for peace dialogue.” *TKP* also revealed the ongoing hitch created by the Maoists, such that even after three days of signing the code, they had not stopped “abductions, killings and extortions.” But the paper called the signing of the code a unique event in that it had taken place “between forces established by the people’s movement” (“Code of Conduct”). However, *TKP* cautioned the signatories as well as the entire country to remain careful to fight all kinds of barriers to the pious task of establishing peace and stability.

In the same way, *THT* held signing of the code a step “to pave way for holding the elections to the constituent assembly . . . in accordance with the 12-point agreement.” At the same time, the paper complained about the cases of violation of the same code, especially by the Maoists. For example, the very next day of signing the code, Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara, who was one the code’s signatories, was addressing a mass gathering in Janakpur in the presence of “a significant number of Khukuri-wielding rebel cadres in battle fatigues.” Nevertheless, *THT* hoped that with the signing of the code, the Maoists’ “subversive activities such as extortions, lootings, kidnappings and, above all, killings” would become “a thing of the past” (“The Gokarna Code”). In a sense, leaders who played with people’s sentiments by displaying ambiguous stances would fail to prove themselves democratic, and would easily earn people’s distrust and be dumped in the pages of a dark history.

In addition to the overlapping postulations discussed above, half a dozen *THT* editorials showed positive attitude towards the establishment and the CPN-M. The texts about the government covered three corollary issues. The first was the announcement of ceasefire and subsequent withdrawal of terrorist tag and red corner notice put against the Maoists (“On a New Plane”). The second involved the annulment of many political appointments by the former regime (“New Frontier”). The third was Prime Minister Koirala’s announcement to hold talks with the CPN-M (“Partners in Progress”). Similarly, the comments about the Maoists also included three significant developments. The first included the “formation of a three-member

negotiation team” by the CPN-M (“Crucial Phase”). The second was Prachanda’s announcement to participate in the high-level talks with PM Koirala as a sign of the Maoists’ readiness for “genuine negotiations” (“House Made of Dawn”).

A third issue in this line as well concerned the 11-point understanding between Maoist trade union, ANTUF, and Birgunj Chambers of Commerce as an evidence that the Maoists had “buried their hatchet for. . . resuming production in the industrial units” (“It’s Not So Simple”). At least one editorial endorsed the instances of rehabilitation and reconciliation happening in the country after the movement. In this connection, *THT* acknowledged the case of Kapilvastu, a conflict-hit district in mid-western Nepal, where internally displaced people were returning their homes. The paper took this instance of homecoming as an evidence of the country’s progress “towards an era of national reconciliation and a permanent peace (“To Hell and Back”).

### **Inferences**

The pre-movement rhetorical exigencies addressed three fundamental questions of what *TKP* and *THT* did, what they showed and what they said. Basically, they highlighted the incidents of political, historical merits before the movement. The twelve-point agreement, municipal elections, judiciary’s activism, the extension and end of Maoist ceasefire, the resurgence of international advocates on Nepal’s crisis count among the most telling rhetorical exigencies about which both papers lent strident voice. These exigencies naturally identified the main political actors of the period – the regime, the SPA, the CPN-M, the security forces and the international community. Thus, overall, the editorials set the mood of the ensuing movement, a more critical rhetorical exigency involving more actions, and added new dimensions to the existing political actors.

A more critical side of the coverage in this phase was the uncovering of the main root of political tension. And the root was the pro-democratic alliance between the parliamentary front and the insurgent Maoists, and the regime’s perceived alternation between disregarding and resisting it. Moreover, the editorials also reveal a couple of instances in which the retaliating side, the government, appeared morally weak. These include general people’s poor response to the municipal elections and the overpowering by the judiciary as in the cases of staying the anti-newscast ordinance and dissolving the RCCC. Both cases of failure signify the victory of the pro-

democratic front over the autocratic royal regime. The parliamentary parties and the CPN-M succeeded in delegitimizing the municipal election, in their own terms, by boycotting and foiling it. The verdict of the Supreme Court plucked out at least one of the regime's hands, the RCCC, and made the regime appear a loser before its pro-democratic adversaries.

Besides, there is a clear indication in the editorials about the ensuing developments events. Rooted in the TPA, and further confirmed by the March 19 understanding, the four-day strike in the SPA's leadership and Maoists' backing was to be a surefire action against the royal regime. The protests were meant to be theoretically peaceful given their basis in SPA's policy of non-violent resurgence against the autocratic monarchy. But the editorials foresaw an aggressive atmosphere. The revision of TADO in the backdrop of the government's uncompromising stance towards the SPA and the CPN-M evidenced the potential of violent clashes during the SPA-led strikes.

A number of inferences can be made from the movement-time editorial representations. In the first place, the nineteen-day uprising completed a physical manifestation of the earlier pro-democratic convergence its fallout, the subsequent tension with the resistant regime. This is to say, the alliance between the SPA and the CPN-M led to the April protests, and the government's aggressive response resulted in violent clashes at different places. However, the editorials only signaled the optimum stage of the protest in terms of both form and impact. In form, the movement saw huge participation of different sections of the society. Its impact was that the regime had begun to seek ameliorative methods of ending the protests, especially seeking help from the diplomatic circles and subsequently luring the leading parties to accept its proposal of conditional reconciliation.

Similarly, each of the major political actors went through phases of transformation. The early protestors were understandably the cadres of the SPA and the CPN-M, and the movement retained a political form during the first couple of days. The protests turned violent when the government aimed to suppress the cadres of the political parties, particularly on the pretext of retaliating the infiltrating Maoist combatants. But when a larger mass of people backed by civil society, government staffs, journalists, and people of different classes and ethnic groups joined the movement, leadership became either diversified or non-definite. The mass then culminated into a decisive force. The force posed resistance on the parties not to

relent with the king's offer to form a government which would literally turn submissive to royalists and the pro-royalist allies. The force equally invalidated the theory of armed insurrection adhered till then by the CPN-M. The force also became insurmountable by the ordinary security resistance. It was pervasive, beyond the capital to almost all urban and rural centers of the country. As a result, the government lost all logical grounds to use violence against the sea of unarmed Nepalese people.

The political parties in the same degree underwent transformation. The movement developed in such a way within the stipulated four days through increasing involvement of people that the SPA had to extend the protests for an indefinite time. This required them to ensure more systematic coordination among themselves, among their cadres, with the activists of the professional groups and with the leaders of the CPN-M so as to retain a non-violent form to the movement. The SPA faced pressure from at least three different forces apart from the oppressive government: the protestors, the CPN-M, the international community. When the protests took a critical turn, the protestors warned the SPA not to compromise with the king for any move less than the establishment of republic. The same was the demand of the CPN-M in the background. On the contrary, a large section of the international community, mainly after the king's first proclamation on April 21, urged the SPA leaders to accept the king's offer, which the leaders were bound to decline in clear submission and regard to the surveillance by the unwavering mass of protestors.

The regime also showed gradual change in its stance. Initially, it appeared to have fallen short of clarity in understanding the alliance's programs. The royalist ministers probably expected to see in the streets only the SPA cadres in limited numbers accompanied by Maoist combatants. The Home ministry appeared all set to treat every protestor as the accomplice to terrorists. It, therefore, assumed an aggressive posture by carrying out mass arrests and imposing curfews in Kathmandu even before the protests began. Initially, the Home and Information ministers became vocal about foiling the protests through all methods of security deployment. Their vows were reflected in violent clashes in Kathmandu and other major cities, including sporadic firings by the security forces and subsequent deaths of protestors. Later, as the mass rose to an unprecedented size, the king started series of political consultations to ameliorate the worsening situation. In this context the ambassadors of the USA, China and India, former PMs Bhattarai and Thapa, and Dr. Karan Singh



emerged as prominent actors albeit for a short time. The consultations resulted in the king's first political concession – the offer to allow the SPA to form a new government in leadership of a consensus prime minister.

One striking feature of the movement-time editorial representation is the way the protestors' side is portrayed as devoid of any weakness. They are shown to have come to the streets with genuine plan to restore democracy by defeating a cruel, inhuman regime. The government is framed as a wrong side – cruel, violent and shortsighted. The pro-democratic agendas may have been of the papers' own editorial priorities for the time, but they could equally have critiqued the fault lines of the protestors as well. The general attitude of the papers, therefore, reveals their meaningful disregard for the weaknesses of the mass and careful castigation of those of the regime.

The movement-time editorials show scanty concern on the Maoist attacks outside the Kathmandu valley. They speak only to the extent of suggesting that these attacks would question CPN-M's commitment to non-violent support in the movement and mar the spirit of peaceful transition from armed insurgency to multiparty democracy. The fact was that CPN-M had announced ceasefire only inside the Kathmandu valley but continued military operations in other parts of the country amid SPA's peaceful protests. This dichotomy should have attracted a little more editorial attention. It is understandable that *TKP* and *THT* were more concerned about whether democracy would be reinstated or remain crushed under the autocratic monarchy but had secondary worries about the means of defeating autocracy.

*TKP* and *THT* assume some common rhetorical stances towards the exigencies of the time. Both papers admit that the regime had failed because of its regressive programs and become the main political eye-shore. But they also show the regime the chances of redemption and survival in complying with the norms of democratic governance, which obviously implied extending truce with the mainstream political parties. Both papers foreground the cause of the movement to be the circumstances that brought the parliamentary parties and the CPN-M together. Both see its success in the gradual weakening of the regime due to its adamancy against pluralism in such situation that a vast majority of conscious population, including both within and without the political parties, were in favor of multi-party democracy.

Both papers attribute the failure of monarchy to the king's leadership. They portray the monarch and his royalist coterie to have deserved the fiasco that they met

by the force of the movement for not knowing the country's socio-political reality and for underestimating the power in the SPA-Maoist agreement. However, they do not voice the total abolition of the institution of monarchy, but of its reformation into a partner in pluralist system with a condition that people are allowed to decide whether to keep or abolish it. The papers are relatively more supportive of the SPA's agendas than its leaders, and more critical about the Maoists' ambiguities than the political causes of the CPN-M. The papers' editorial involvement reveals their advocacy for multi-party democracy, establishment of peace, and inclusive development by ending the Maoist insurgency.

The post-movement editorials highlight the April Movement as the culmination of the TPA. The papers frequently urge the political parties to abide by the mandates of the agreement, especially for its ultimate goal of holding constituent assembly elections. Thus, the papers endorse any radical initiation by both the new government and the CPN-M. Restoration of the House, the House resolution for constituent assembly, formation of the Rayamajhi Commission, and the proclamation of disempowering the king count among the crucial decisions made by the new government, which the papers readily approve. Similarly, the formation of talks team, and the readiness for signing the code of conduct feature as the main positive initiations by the CPN-M. Overall, the papers show that the TPA had not lost its spirit in the post-movement phase.

The royal regime did not cease making headlines though it had apparently gone out of active politics. Both papers bring to light the financial irregularities by the royal family and the ministers of the royal regime, and reiterate their involvement in suppressing the pro-democratic movement. But both clearly indicate that the former regressive force led by the royalists was not in a condition to rise again. This was particularly because the sovereign House had snatched all the executive and ancestral privileges from the monarch. Thus, the papers show that the parliamentary parties and the CPN-M, albeit haltingly, have set enough ground for peace process after the success of the April protests.

The papers display a general critical detachment in their evaluation of the mainstream actors of the time. For example, both welcome the progressive decisions of the SPA, but are critical about their ambiguities and delays such as in forming the government and penalizing the oppressors of the April Movement. In the same way, though both *TKP* and *THT* stridently disapprove any rebellious and provocative acts

of the Maoist leaders and cadres, they give the CPN-M due recognition as an inevitable part of the ongoing peace process. This is to say, the papers endorse the positive changes of the period without pampering the change-makers, and disapprove the fault lines without discrediting the principal actors' contributions.

One notable aspect of the post-movement editorial coverage is the way the main actors are shown in differentiated roles. The SPA, which was at the receiving end before the movement, now held power and turned overnight into a giver. The Maoists alternated their positions between receiving credits and snatching power, and yet showed readiness to give support to the SPA-led government in matters of ameliorative initiations. We see that the former antagonist represented by the royal palace was no longer an effective actor in the post-movement phase. But the negative force was not absent. The Maoists were still in the opposition as before. The only difference was they had halted military operations in order to facilitate the peace process. But their negative posture had sustained in that they poised themselves ambiguously between rebelling and reconciling. Rather, the rebel aspect appeared more striking in their reported adamancy in abiding by the law, in their continued extortion and radical activism apart from their consistent demand for the dissolution of the newly revived parliament. Thus, the CPN-M still stood to become one of the blemishes to positive transition.

Yet, the Maoists were not alone to take the blame for the potential retardation of peace process. The parliamentary leaders' "old habits" of bickering for portfolios had not died, to the extent that important decisions were being stalled in the contest of grabbing "ministerial berths." Parties in the helm of the government, NC, UML and NC-D, reportedly showed reluctance to detach from the 1990 Constitution, much to the ire of CPN-M, and to the threat of increasing distrust between the partners in peace process. Then there was the RNA visibly reluctant to adapt to the political changes heading towards republic. The RNA is rather portrayed inclined to create trouble anytime, such as in the killing of civilians in Belbari and the aerial attacks on the Maoist gathering in Nawalparasi.

Above all, *TKP* and *THT* sympathize with the parliamentary line and their roadmap in that they hailed the restoration of the House; they endorsed undertakings of the House and the SPA-led government. This is to say, the papers' common line goes against a radical agenda like the Maoists' demand of House dissolution and all-party conference towards holding the constituent assembly elections. Both papers

demanded systematic decommissioning of Maoist arms, and conversion of the rebels into peaceable political forces before the elections of constituent assembly. Apart from voicing the priority to maintaining law and order and establishing clean financial character in the political forces, the papers urge both the government and the CPN-M to respect the spirit of the TPA. They highlight the TPA and the code of conduct as the main binding factors to ensure the election to constituent assembly. Overall, *TKP* and *THT* maintain a clear voice to suggest a prognosis for changed Nepal.

The discussions above unfold the principal rhetorical dramas and give clear sense of the main characters, actions and settings of the political changes in Nepal before, during and after the April protests. We mainly see the rise and fall of the royalists and the continuous presence of the pro-democratic actors. The main actions suggest a visible progression of historical events from crisis, climax, and resolution to further emergence of new agendas and new crises. The discussions also help infer the nature of the two papers' rhetorical involvement during the political transition surrounding the April Movement. The involvement is characterized by different modes of rejecting autocracy and supporting multiparty democracy in Nepal.

## CHAPTER V

### April Movement Narratives

How many monarchies have won a war with their own people?

- *TKP*, 1 Feb. 2006

The twenty-first century does not believe in the divine right of kings.

- *THT*, 8 Dec. 2005

The context, occurrence and aftermath of the April Movement bear multiple narratives with diversity of actors, actions, settings and metaphors. The editorials recapture at least eight representative narrative types suggestive of eight movement fantasy types. Each narrative carries one storyline with one distinct historical persona perceived either as a protagonist or an antagonist. The eight personae that lead the storylines are the Seven-Parties Alliance, the Maoists, the royal regime, the security forces, the judiciary, Nepali people, the media and the international community. In what follows, I present each narrative with its underlying fantasy themes of dramatis personae, plotlines, settings and symbolic cues. The chapter mainly aims to recount the historical realities surrounding the April Movement as represented in the editorials of *TKP* and *THT*.

#### **From Streets to the House**

The Seven-Parties Alliance (or the Alliance) was the major protagonist of the April Movement. The Alliance embodied a committed and forward-looking collectivity of the political forces, which had signed a manifesto of convergence with the insurgent Maoists. Thus, it assumed the identity of the “torch-bearer of the democratic movement” (*TKP*, “Polarizing Politics”) with the popularity to invite “unprecedented presence of politically charged crowds” during its protest programs in the post-TPA days (*TKP*, “Message of Jan 21<sup>st</sup>”). The Alliance’s narrative, therefore, marks the transition from a subdued collectivity of parties to a triumphant political force. The period of six months showed the Alliance trying to accumulate political credibility and popular support, pushing for confrontation with the regime, and rising to the mainstream after having defeated the regime. The Alliance’s story is that of a journey from the streets to the helm of power.

The editorial portrayal of the main protagonist dramatis persona involves a number of character types. The first of these include the identity of a “force.” The

Alliance was a counter-military front of “peace-loving revolutionary forces,” in front of whom the guns of the Royal Nepalese Army would “melt down” (*TKP*, “Relentless Move”). The Alliance as well comprised “constitutional” (*TKP*, “Eluding Democracy”) thereby “principal” (*THT*, “Come with the Wind”) and “legitimate” political forces, from which the monarchy faced “circumstances of existential threat” (*THT*, “Black Bird’s Spoken”). Another striking positive feature of this front was that the parties were “fighting for the people’s rights” (*TKP*, “Human Casualties”) and they reflected “need of the country and the people” (*TKP*, “FSU Elections”). Besides, respect and support could be accorded to them for their success in including the Maoists in the democratic process “after a long period of enmity” (*THT*, “Come with the Wind”).

**Table 5: SCT-FTC Concepts Discussed in Chapter V**

Concepts	Definitions
Fantasy theme	Any signifier representing a persona, action or setting; an interpretative expression telling of events in the past or aspirations for the future.
Fantasy type	A cluster of fantasy themes; a signifier for collectivity of narratives, characters, actions and settings; a referent for currency of an idea or a theme.
Dramatis personae (characters)	Actors in a narrative representing certain emotion or traits of character, either positively portrayed as a hero/protagonist or negatively as a villain/antagonist, or neutral.
Plotline (action)	Act or deed of a character. Action reflects the nature of happening, intensity of change, traits of characters, and the extent of decisiveness.
Setting (scene)	Place or space where actions take place; seen both as a physical location or a political, cultural space.
Symbolic cue	A cryptic signifier, metaphoric/allusive/connotative expression typical for a cultural/political context and group of people; reminds of one or more stories and personae.

The Alliance’s protagonist persona features in terms of its gradual political awakening. The realization of the need to collaborate with the Maoists in fighting autocracy was the first instance of awakening which culminated in the signing of the TPA in November 2005. This collaboration led their decision not to act on the admonitions of the “Kathmandu-based high-voltage diplomats” who had constantly insisted on the parties’ alignment with the palace at the cost of the Maoists (*THT*, “Dissent Is Democracy”). This had also happened after their collective realization that

the establishment had only tried to lure them by promises of returning power but literally was not committed to peace and democracy.

Complementary to the aspect of awakening was their ‘political acumen’ and popularity. First, they were “able to convince Maoists” that the road to constituent assembly could be carved through collective movement against autocratic monarchy (*TKP*, “Unprecedented”). The TPA was the culmination of the Alliance’s acumen in ending their long-drawn enmity with the insurgents. They were, therefore, able to draw the ‘unprecedented presence of politically charged crowds’ and a neutral mass of protestors in later times. They also maintained a strategic distance from the Maoists’ overtures such as by rejecting the latter’s proposal of “common slogan, common front and common program,” while remaining mindful that “breaking off with the Maoists would carry greater risks” (*THT*, “Dissent Is Democracy”). Most important of all, they could not be tempted any more by the monarch’s call for power-sharing. The commitment for a joint movement with the Maoists was far stronger than the possibility of being allured to “abandon the movement midstream at the sight of some carrots dangled” (*THT*, “No Ordinary Time”).

The Alliance’s collective strength was inevitable, forceful and wide. That they were the only ‘legitimate’ democratic front, or the ‘bedrock of democracy,’ suggested that their isolation and suppression could be “detrimental to our society” (*TKP*, “FSU Elections”). Despite being the collectivity of established political parties, the Alliance’s scope was beyond the cadres of the constituent parties. Since the armed party like the CPN-M was hand in hand in principle for peaceful movement, the Alliance epitomized the general hope for democracy and peace. As parts of the Alliance parties and their leaders appeared to maintain firmness in their conviction to “overthrow the autocratic government through peaceful means” (*TKP*, “Right to Life”). Therefore, in terms of the size of public support, the agitation of April could literally “have the makings of the latter days of 1990 pro-democratic movement” (*THT*, “The Making of Sense”). The CPN-M’s public announcement to lend peaceful support to the movement alarmed the government, which took it for a possible armed infiltration and turned its repression even more brutal. But the fact that the CPN-M had joined the peaceful movement can equally be termed the Alliance’s success (*TKP*, “Whose Infiltration?”).

The royal government must have been either myopic or absolutely biased in thinking that only the cadres of the parliamentary parties and the CPN-M were

protesting in the streets. Civil servants came out to lend solidarity to the Alliance's movement right under the noses of Home Minister, Chief Secretary and Cabinet Vice Chair in the very premises of the Singh Durbar (*TKP*, "Turning Point"). Professional groups and a formidable mass of general people had already shown "increasing involvement in spite of the parties' serious weaknesses" in the past (*THT*, "Angle of Repose", 18 Apr. 2006), because what led the movement was not a cluster of individuals, but the collective hope that Nepal would have democracy, peace and prosperity.

The Alliance's role expanded as soon as the House of Representatives was restored and the royal government dismantled. The Alliance naturally ascended the helm of power, say, from the fringe and assumed three-fold responsibilities: the executive, the legislative and the coalition of governing parties. The fact of its being the only legitimate force was established at this point. As the executive, the Alliance became 'people's government' and a surrogate state to manage the ongoing transition. It had a number of crucial responsibilities ahead. Among these included taking legal action against the agents of repression, managing compensation for the loss of lives, and rehabilitation of the injured (*THT*, "New Dawn"; *TKP*, "Martyrs' Rights"). The need to maintain law and order and to clear the path for holding the constituent assembly elections were other equally inevitable junctures. In the same manner, having been "different from the autocratic regime," and as the government of people, it had to distinguish "misguided-but-untainted people" from those "who abused human rights and embezzled state treasury" during the autocratic rule (*TKP*, "Show Tolerance").

Similarly, the Alliance-led government could not "afford to get lost in the rigmarole of parliamentary procedures and meetings" (*THT*, "The Bull's Eye") by delaying urgent tasks such as talks with the CPN-M. Because the restoration of the House and formation of a coalition government were only transitional arrangements, any delay on the part of the government to execute agendas for constituent assembly would trigger unrest in the CPN-M. As a consequence, the Maoists would "insist on an interim government" (*THT*, "Old Habits Die Hard") to push for an arrangement including themselves. The ministers could thus be best expected to "concentrate on important matters of state affairs rather than in seminars and other ribbon-cutting exercises" (*THT*, "Call It Courage"). Times needed prompt actions; delays would lead



to the crisis of faith among the signatories of the TPA on whose foundation the changes had occurred.

The Alliance-led government managed to make progression despite some dilly-dallying in distribution of ministerial portfolios. To reiterate from what is reported in the previous chapter, it made a number of timely decisions. It formed a five-member judicial commission to investigate excesses during the uprising and suspended some of the suspects from the security agencies and the government bodies. It declared ceasefire to facilitate talks with the CPN-M, and formed a talks team. Similarly, the government annulled the ordinances imposed by the erstwhile regime. Then, it brought out a White Paper with a report on the country's financial status during the royal rule. Foremost, it held talks with the CPN-M and signed a ceasefire code of conduct.

The reinstated House retained much of the Alliance's progressive characters. Literally, despite its gigantic scope, the House was a "date-expired" body brought alive with a mandate to push for constituent assembly (*THT*, "Old Habits Die Hard"). Yet, it remained to be an embodiment of change in all respects, as a supreme, sovereign institution. It did what it was meant to do as the "first step towards fulfillment of the demand of the *Jana Andolan*," the resolution for "unconditional CA" (*THT*, "No Riding Again"). The resolution was historic in the sense of being passed for the first time after 1951, when it had to be done as promised by the then monarch Tribhuvan but was put off for 55 years. Also, one notable aspect of the House was that it was "vastly different in nature, function and scope from all the preceding ones" (*THT*, "Bull's Eye") considering the power it had assumed. For example, the House made the seminal proclamation of May 18, in which a number of radical resolutions were passed, including bestowal of the entire legislative rights on itself, depriving the king of all his former executive prerogatives, naming the government as Government of Nepal and the national army as Nepalese Army and, above all, declaring the country secular (Appendix III, "House Proclamation").

As the coalition of governing parties, the Alliance is perceived to have faced the necessity to neutralize intra- and inter-party hassles both in centers and grassroots. There was equally the need to redirect their cadres in more productive everyday activities. At the same time they had to continue exerting pressure on their own government to meet the demands of the movement. They would have to define the roles and goals of the parties in the newly restored House and newly formed

government, and accordingly mobilize the representatives as per the collective decisions of the Alliance. In this sense, the Alliance's role had to be constructive and reconciliatory outside the government, especially as long as the main partner in progress, the CPN-M, was waiting to come to the mainstream and the regressive elements of the erstwhile regime would any moment try to foil the ongoing peace process.

No doubt, the parties represented the spirit of democracy and pluralism and placed mainstreaming of the Maoists on the top of their roadmap. They assumed the character of a mainstream political front after the TPA, and accomplished a number of progressive tasks. For instance, they disrupted the municipal polls on the condition that the elections were not going to be constitutional and were being held “just to entrench the king's autocracy” (*TKP*, “Right to Life”). As ‘bedrock of multi-party parliamentary democracy’ they fought a democratic battle facing a threat of military reprisal and undergoing arrest, torture and detention. Thus, their position is adorable and strong in the post-TPA phase, which is to say, they were way beyond being marginalized “on the strength of gun,” let alone the fact that the government was intent on eliminating the entire democratic front (*THT*, “Fire in the Lake”).

The fact that the Alliance served a protagonist prominence should not lead us to accord the same optimistic posture to its constituents, the political parties. If dissociated from the productive and progressive face of the Alliance, the parties would primarily appear in relatively poorer selves. The reasons for their unpopularity were apparent. For example, parties which had remained in power in the post-1990 era such as NC and UML, were known for their “failure to control corruption and poor governance” (*TKP*, “Message of Jan 21<sup>st</sup>”), for “being power hungry” or literally for “running after the chair” (*TKP*, “People's Power”). During their marginalization by the king, the parties were in some way “paying the price in terms of the erosion of public trust.” In reality, the parties and their leaders would signify a fragmented, old and stagnant segment of Nepali history given the fact that some leaders within the parties favored the old constitutional order (*THT*, “Crucial Phase”). Often criticized for their notoriety for “inter- and intra-party bickering” during their heydays, they also showed considerable relapse of their old habits even after the success of the movement in April 2006 (*THT*, “Summer of Swans”). They again became “bickering partners” over the number of seats they held in the House of Representatives before it was dissolved in May 2002 (*THT*, “Old Habits Die Hard”). The NC and the UML, in

particular, showed a tendency to waste valuable time on “wrangling over petty matters instead of grappling with issues of greater significance to the nation” (*THT*, “Summer of Swans”; “Lessons Not Learnt”).

From among the seven parties in the Alliance, the editorials portrayed with emphasis only the NC, the CPN-UML and the NC-D. To acknowledge the most positive side of them, these parties can be taken to have maintained the status of prominence in the Alliance prior to, during and after the movement. Each of these signatories of the TPA were marked to have ‘displayed political acumen to resolve the conflict,’ showed ‘extraordinary statesmanship,’ ‘buried the hatchet in the interest of the country and ended ‘a long period of enmity and difference’ among one another as well as with the Maoists. The NC and the UML in particular were established democratic parties with such national base that a party like the RPP, which had emerged in the post-Panchayat democratic era from the stalwarts of Panchayat itself, could hardly become their democratic alternative (*THT*, “RPP vs. RPP”).

The NC was considered a victim of the royal influence, with a history of NC-D’s split in 2002 (*THT*, “Untimely Wrinkle”; “Friday Night Fever”). In this sense, too, the party was firmly committed to retract the democratic system by restoring the House. Like other signatories in the Alliance, the NC might have taken a soft line for the institution of monarchy in that the TPA had remained silent about the status of monarchy. NC leaders, especially Koirala, were reported to have frequently stated a possible space for the monarchy in a future setup under the condition that the monarch agreed to remain within limited privileges (*THT*, “Angle of Repose” 1 Dec. 2005). Later in April, the NC led the people’s movement mobilization team for the Alliance. It was obvious for the party to be in situational pressure – from the Alliance members, from the mass and the ruling opposition. The pressure from the members of diplomatic agencies to accept king’s offer of power-sharing following his April 21 address was so high that the protesting mass and party cadres reached the position to suspect the commitment of the Alliance itself. The NC as a dominant member took the side of the mass along with other Alliance members and partook in the decision to continue the protest until the restoration of the House.

The NC’s post-movement image is not of as much veneration as could be expected of a party that led both the foregone movement and the coalition government. As expected, the CPN-M expressed dissatisfaction over the Alliance’s decision to end the movement on the gain of the House terming it a “big historical

mistake” (*THT*, “New Dawn”). The new government’s principal challenge was to convince the Maoists in practice that the restored House and the coalition government were only transitory settlements towards meeting the goal of the TPA, the constituent assembly. This positive challenge aside, the party failed to display change in nature since its members began quarrelling over the distribution of portfolios. NC’s position became paradoxical; the party which was given the share of premiership was “rather unfairly, insisting on having the lion’s share, including the cream portfolios,” thereby reflecting negatively on PM Koirala himself (*THT*, “Old Habits Die Hard”). NC’s insistence on having a larger share was termed its show of “small-mindedness.” (*THT*, “Lessons Not Learnt”). Thus, the party’s overall image in the post-movement context is not that of a dedicated change-agent. Moreover, its journey towards CA and republic is often seen with skepticism based on the fact that it had such influential leaders who wanted to “retain the existing constitutional order” with minimum amendments for an interim constitution (*THT*, “Crucial Phase”).

The CPN-UML features as a party somehow uninfluenced by the royal regime in the aspect of falling into divisions, unlike the NC (*THT*, “Untimely Wrinkle”). It is also portrayed as a party capable of forging alliance with the CPN-M, a more radical communist faction, despite records of enmity between them and as unexpected by some of the country’s “political pundits” (*TKP*, “Unprecedented”). Its stronghold in the democratic Alliance is perceived in the results of the March 2006 elections for Free Students’ Union bodies in different campuses under Tribhuvan University and Mahendra Sanskrit University, where its affiliate student wing, All Nepal National Free Students’ Union (ANNFSU) bagged majority of seats (*THT*, “Don’t Get Lost”; *TKP*, “FSU Elections”).

However, like the NC, the CPN-UML did not remain unaffected by the inter- and intra-party hassles regarding the distribution of portfolios in the new government following the movement. There was an understandable “squabble over cabinet formation between the two biggest parliament parties, the NC and the UML.” There was dissatisfaction within the UML, evidenced by the resignation by leader Pradeep Nepal from the party’s politburo in refutation of being denied ‘honorable space’ for the party in the coalition government (*THT*, “Lessons Not Learnt”). The party could have backed the government fully from outside to help achieve the main goal of mainstreaming the CPN-M and making progression towards constituent assembly. However, the UML is credited for bringing a few radical proposals to the government

and the House. One of these includes “arresting and jailing the vice-chairmen and ministers of the royal cabinet for their role in suppressing the *Jana Andolan*.” Two other proposals are about renaming His Majesty’s Government to Nepal Government, and Royal Nepalese Army to Nepal Army (*THT*, “Time for Justice”). But the party was only little expected to work for radical changes because, like in NC, there were people who wanted to retain the existing constitutional structure with minimum changes, and “give the amended constitution an interim character, to retain this House, as well as to induct Maoists into such a government” (*THT*, “Crucial Phase”). The sad part of this, the Maoists would not accept the idea.

The NC-D counts as the least appreciated entity among the parties in the Alliance. It is somehow noted with criticism not only as a splinter from the NC in the notoriety of being a byproduct of royal influence, but also for serving close to the monarchy prior to the February 2005. The party began to gain an image of a devoted pro-democratic front when its general convention in January 2006 removed monarchy from its constitution. NC-D’s formal detachment from monarchy marked monarchy’s further alienation from legitimate political forces. On its part, however, the NC-D is supposed to take longer time to rid itself of the stigma of having been a principal cause of February 2005 coup. It had the challenge to “shake off its past.” (*THT*, “Black Bird’s Spoken”). Even in the post-movement transition, the party failed to be different from the NC and the UML in terms of internal quarrel over the distribution of portfolios. Meddled in intra-party wrangling, it took two weeks to “decide on who would represent the NC-D in the cabinet (*TKP*, “Exemplary Move”).

In addition to suggesting such lack of mutual trust-building, the papers ascribe a level of empathy to the political parties. The parties were also the victims of circumstances in the past. They were “deceived by the palace more than once” after October 2002 (*THT*, “Building Bridges”; “Turning Point”). Even worse, they were “bitten more than once” in their temptation for power-sharing with the monarch (*THT*, “Poll Dilemma”). An even greater note of sympathy for them would be this: “Democracy did not sustain in Nepal not because the parliamentary parties were unsuccessful to act democratically, but due to the constant attacks by the Maoists and the monarchists” (*TKP*, “Eluding Democracy”). There was a time when parties’ governments were either confronting or negotiating with the insurgent Maoists. Now was when the royalists considered them their arch enemies (*THT*, “Dicey’s Song”). The post-movement times were by all means pressing. The parties were to be “tested

even more in the days to come” through an “unpredictable political situation,” with “even more fierce and decisive” political showdowns (*THT*, “Black Bird’s Spoken”). They were under constant vigilance. They were warned by the general public “not to do anything to compromise people’s sovereignty and rights” (*THT*, “Lessons Not Learnt”). Thus, the political parties were the most challenged and scrutinized actors during the political transitions both preceding and following the people’s movement.

This is tantamount to saying that leaders in the pro-democratic front fell in the same degree of challenge and scrutiny, while serving the ambiguous personae of heroes and sufferers. To say the least, for the mass that waited for a change in the country, the TPA had projected the leaders as potential harbingers of peace and prosperity. In the eyes of the royalists like Kamal Thapa or Tulsi Giri they were either terrorists or “fanatics” (*THT*, “Arctic Dreams”). The members of Raj Parishad, an institution comprising diehard royalists, denigrated them as anti-national outcasts for opposing the hegemony of monarchy (*THT*, “Twilight Rhetoric”). In fact, the leaders in the SPA, who achieved visibility in the selected editorials, deserve some space here for their position within the dichotomy of being heroes and non-heroes.

A leader of such posture during the six-month transition was Girija Prasad Koirala, the then president of the NC, former prime minister and the Alliance’s consensus prime minister for the post-movement time. When the TPA was signed, Koirala was accorded with high veneration as “the fatherly figure of democracy,” especially for making the TPA possible, and in that way being the initiator of the movement (*TKP*, “Unprecedented”). The movement placed the “fatherly” persona as a unanimous prime minister to represent the SPA and the country at large. In this new role, despite his government’s upfront undertakings in the direction of mainstreaming the Maoist insurgents and reforming the state system, Koirala is also portrayed as embroiled in intra- and inter-party hassles regarding the allocation of ministerial positions. He is criticized for the lack of statesmanship, “a quality he was not perceived to have shown” during the heydays of the NC before the monarch took over all state power (*THT*, “Old Habits Die Hard”). He is warned not to go by the rituals of the Constitution to take oath of office from the defeated monarch while the restored House could sanction all his forward-looking actions (*TKP*, “Warning Bell”).

Moreover, Koirala is criticized for at least three other acts as a consensus PM. The first included the case of his alleged reward of exemption to the Chief of the Army, which simply dumped the popular demand of forthright penalty to the latter.

He was reportedly “flanked by three senior-most colleagues of his cabinet” in solacing the Chief and also seeking the latter’s help in strengthening the government (*TKP*, “Discrimination”). The second took the case of withholding Chitralekha Yadav, a leader of the NC-D and the Deputy Speaker in the restored House, for the post of the Speaker “despite the fact that she was undeniably the first choice of the majority of the people.” Consequently, Koirala was termed as “guided more by the party politics than individual talent, gender and marginalized caste” (*TKP*, “Exemplary Move”). The third, a general but serious issue, was the complaint that the Koirala-led government deliberately delayed and was also unable to “speedily address the popular agenda in the parliament along the spirit of *Jana Andolan*” (*THT*, “Call It Courage”).

Sher Bahadur Deuba, former PM and the president of the NC-D, features in the editorials in an equally ambiguous persona. During the post-TPA days he was jailed by the RCCC on charges of corruption. So, he appeared to evoke some degree of sympathy from people. But, according to *THT*, he was still remembered for the dissolution of the House in May 2002 as, therefore, “a leader responsible for such disastrous consequences for the country” (“Black Bird’s Spoken”). His past roles were marked for “causing incalculable damage to democracy” (“Love Me True”). The general public would literally remain uninterested in his activities and that of his party even when it had dropped constitutional monarchy from its constitution and was making overtures of unification with the NC.

In the post-movement scenario, Deuba gets a mention at least twice in relation with controversy. The first related the appointment of Chitra Lekha Yadav as the Minister for Water Resources in the Alliance-led cabinet. He reportedly “did not bother to seek her consent before nominating her name” for the ministry she literally declined. It was in such situation that she was denied Speaker’s position despite her legitimate claim for it as she already was the Deputy Speaker in the restored House (*TKP*, “Exemplary Move”). The second case concerned a controversial statement he was believed to have made about the king thereby triggering street protests and vandalism. He had reportedly “suggested that the king should be allowed to remain the supreme commander-in-chief of the army sans uniform.” He was therefore noted to be in need to “display a higher sense of responsibility” during the sensitive times of political transition (*THT*, “Summer of Swans”).

Another senior politician brought to discourse in relation with the movement is Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, former PM and NC leader. He was one of those democrats who unequivocally advocated the atonement in the king rather than his forced ouster. He had a very high regards for constitutional monarchy. He advised the king to remain above criticism to retain the status of monarchy (*THT*, “Salvaging Act”). The king consulted him during the peak of the movement while “trying to seek a solution by appointing a middleman” like Bhattarai (*TKP*, “People’s Power”). The latter is reported to have placed high emphasis on the reactivation of the 1990 Constitution as the solution of the crisis. Right after the audience with the king, he had publicly admitted being a royalist. But his suggestions are taken in stark detachment from the demands of time, and “not in touch with reality.” His idea of reactivating 1990 Constitution is dismissed as tantamount to prescribing “a date-expired medicine for a serious disease” (*THT*, “The Age of Change”).

Apart from these personalities associated with the democratic front, Madhab Kumar Nepal, the General Secretary of CPN-UML, features in relatively less ambiguous persona in the editorial discourse. Nepal was one of the main eyesores of the royal government. His house in Koteswor was raided following his detention in Kakani. Earlier, Nepal was one of the negotiators with the CPN-M, and a signatory to the TPA. He was in favor of continuing dialogues with the Maoists to focus on the resolution of the armed conflict (*TKP*, “Move Prudently”). He was one of the mainstream leaders to “urge the Maoists to halt their negative activities” in the post-TPA phase (*THT*, “Promises to Keep”). He was also one of those who voiced for “state support” to the Maoists during the peace process in the movement’s aftermath (*TKP*, “Rebel Extortions”). However, in the case of distributing ministerial portfolios within his own party, like Koirala, Nepal is also alleged to have been “guided more by party politics than individual talent, gender and marginalized caste” (*TKP*, “Exemplary Move”).

Aside from such blemish that often left the public wondering whether the parties and their leaders could at all resolve the Maoist insurgency and clear the road to peace and prosperity, the Alliance signifies a resurrection of political will, a sort of moral edification towards pushing for a more inclusive and dynamic system of governance. Their presence and leadership was inevitable both in the peaceful movement against autocracy, and in peaceful management of transition in the movement’s aftermath. In this sense, the credit for being a dedicated pro-democratic



front is reasonably ascribed to the Alliance of seven parties in totality, and not the individual parties and their leaders. To regard the Alliance as a coordinated force as well underlies the significance of other constituent parties in keeping the coordination intact despite the counterparts' weaknesses.

The plotlines underlying the narrative of the Alliance present them in a dichotomous persona including both positive and negative actions, as suggested in the attributions discussed above. The most representative positive actions concern conflict resolution, credibility, discretion, pervasiveness and victory. Among the striking negative plotlines are temporary inaction and procrastination.

The Alliance's participation in conflict resolution involved their success in materializing the TPA by convincing the CPN-M to agree on peaceful and democratic means. This is termed as the situation in which formerly enemies had 'buried hatchet for the interest of the country.' The Alliance, therefore, had "opened a direct channel of communication with the Maoists" (*THT*, "Door in the Wall"), and were in constant vigilance so as not to let the latter quit the peace process. But they also knew the urgency of "distancing themselves" from the Maoists at the possibility of their violent involvement in any future plan like boycotting the municipal elections (*TKP*, "Right to Life"). Such dissociation would warn the Maoists that the Alliance would not endorse any of their disruptive activities. Moreover, people expected the Alliance to remain committed to their promises. One promise, as delineated in the TPA, was simply the 'resolution of the 10-year old insurgency'. This, for that time, required them to continue negotiations with the Maoist insurgents and to urge them to shun violence. The Alliance somehow needed to ensure that the Maoists earned credibility of a harmonious party by behaving constructively. In this way their assimilation into the mainstream politics would be more convenient in that people would find them acceptable. Integration of the Maoists would then lead the process to "help restore peace and dignity" of Nepali people at large (*TKP*, "Martyr's Rights").

Furthermore, the Alliance's protagonist persona suggests a gradual revival of credibility as a leading democratic front. Credibility in the first place refers to the power of discretion. This is to say, the Alliance did not allow their collaboration with the Maoists to be mired by controversies. They retained the credit of being a peaceful force by "keeping the Maoists successfully out of the peaceful rallies" and instead winning the "support of the general public" (*TKP*, "Message of Jan 21<sup>st</sup>"). In the post-TPA transitions, as much as earlier, the Alliance's principal ethical challenge was to

reclaim the identity of a pro-democratic leader. They had to foil the royalists' attempt at downgrading them as corrupt, win people's favor against the general belief that political parties were the chief causes of underdevelopment and regression in Nepal. Another factor that boosted the Alliance's credibility was the results of student union elections in TU and MSU, in which student wings affiliated to major parliamentary parties won majority seats. The result is believed to give prominence to the Alliance as a force to "reflect the need of the country and the people" (*TKP*, "FSU Elections"). The Alliance could easily defeat the autocratic government if they worked in unison with the CPN-M. Dissociation from the latter "would carry greater risks" of reprisal and loss (*THT*, "Dissent Is Democracy").

Thus, the Alliance stayed at the center of general hope and expectations. They were expected to act discretely and retain their credibility. They were required to "work harder and be prepared for a few sacrifices," even when the Maoists broke the unilateral ceasefire and resorted to violence staking the post-TPA peace environment into uncertainty (*TKP*, "Relentless Move"). The April protests culminate in lending the Alliance a role of guardianship even though the Maoists as the most dashing partner could claim a large share of credits for the movement's success. The Alliance-led establishment then had to take care of the families of the martyrs including those of the Maoists (*TKP*, "Martyrs' Rights"), which virtually implied showing gratitude to the "worthy sons and daughters of Nepal" who had made the movement resultant (*THT*, "New Dawn"). After all, the SPA-led government was different, with such genuine requirements as to eliminate "nepotism, cronyism, corruption and favoritism" (*TKP*, "Show Tolerance"), and to "concentrate in constructive nation-building efforts" (*THT*, "Summer of Swans"). The Alliance could thus retain their public credibility which had largely been at stake due to their widely criticized non-performance during their heydays in the post-1990 times.

The post-TPA period marks by pervasion of the Alliance as a pro-movement front. The TPA functions as the major vehicle for pervasion. The TPA, and therefore its signatories, "won a fairly wide support at home setting in motion a new political momentum" (*THT*, "Angle of Repose" 1 Dec.2005). As a result, the anti-autocracy mood spread across the country. The optimum level of pervasiveness occurred during the April protests. The protests signified that peace was "overruling the country" and guns were "being challenged by fervent slogans." It was when peaceful movement was believed to "lead the way" putting the armed rebels in the "back seat" (*TKP*,

“Ceasefire!”). The multitude of protestors that owned the agenda of democracy and republic comprised a large number of professionals and general public. As a consequence, the royal government could “not keep the rising tide of protestors from eventually overwhelming it” (*THT*, “Love Me Tender”). The Alliance’s popularity and pervasion was marked by the size, frequency and spread of protestors all over the country and in the streets of Kathmandu.

The plotlines suggesting final assaults involve the events following the municipal polls of February 2006. The Alliance’s boycott and the government’s perceived failure in ensuring considerable voter turnout signaled that the royal government was facing the crisis of legitimacy and would be on the verge of going defensive. Sporadic peaceful rallies during the winter “terrified the government” (*TKP*, “On Collision Course”). Forebodings of greater, more fierce and decisive political showdowns surfaced when parties began internal consolidations and pledged greater solidarity to a peaceful movement (*THT*, “Black Bird’s Spoken”). Besides, renewed talks with the Maoists culminated in a second-round understanding on ushering a peaceful joint movement. The Alliance fixed four days of strike for April and the Maoists pledged to lend support. This marked the actual “final peaceful assault on the autocratic regime” (*TKP*, “Turning Point”). The movement’s force, as stated earlier, had the likelihood to “uproot the 237-year old institution.” The Alliance and the people “forced the king” to declare a return of “power to the people” (*TKP*, “People’s Power”). A forced proclamation by the king signified the Alliance’s victory over autocracy.

The Alliance could not claim being flawless in their actions since the constituent leaders had weaknesses. In the month following the movement, the Alliance-led government was seen enmeshed in trivialities. Temporary inaction and procrastination were close to frustrating the general public. In the first place, there was confusion regarding the Constitutional norms on the process of oath-taking by Girija Prasad Koirala, the consensus PM (*TKP*, “Warning Bell”). Leaders were engaged in weighing up the situational propriety of taking oath in the House over the constitutionality of doing so from the recently defeated king. Leading parties fell in the squabble over power sharing, including “pettifogging over cabinet berths” and “showing deficiency of democratic character in dealing with party matters (*THT*, “Lessons Not Learnt”). In a sense, their inaction during that crucial juncture was equated with “wasting valuable time wrangling over petty matters (*THT*, “Summer of

Swans”). They were instead supposed to wrestle with problems of higher importance to Nepal as a whole.

But there was no escape. The Alliance’s actions were bound to be progressive following the restoration of the House in the role of guardians to the nation. The government forged a number of radical decisions to mark the beginning of new historical era. The House resolution on CA and the proclamation on bestowing full sovereignty on the House and the government were path-breaking events. In a series of forward-looking actions, the government declared a ceasefire, lifted the terrorist tag on the Maoists, withdrew Red Corner Notice put on them by the erstwhile regime, and called them for peace talks. In yet another landmark decision, the government rolled back the ordinances issued by the royal government after October 4, 2002. The step also helped retract the constitutional provisions and eased the proceedings of the judiciary.

To reiterate, the Alliance as the government symbolized hope and change. This automatically entailed the need to ensure justice to the sufferers of the movement. People’s immediate expectation from the government concerned initiation of legal action “against the security personnel involved in firing the unarmed protestors” (*TKP*, “Martyrs’ Rights”). The government formed a judicial commission in respect to this demand. Though left in charge of innumerable responsibilities of addressing the transition, especially when the Maoists signaled a quandary between being of the mainstream or the jungle, the government was expected to “work only as a stopgap arrangement” with a clear mandate to “restore peace and consolidate democracy through CA” (*THT*, “Old Habits Die Hard”). The Alliance’s success to this direction would usher the country “in an era of good governance and prosperity” (*THT*, “On a New Plane”). Best of all, the Alliance would be credited for the ability to “create a sound, solid, cohesive and all-inclusive nation” (*THT*, “Promises to Keep”). The movement’s aftermath, therefore, marked an ordeal for the leading parliamentary forces.

The narrative of the Alliance’s ascent to the helm of power involves several settings. Most striking of all is the setting of the streets. In fact, two common idioms of Nepalese political dramas – ‘the street-based struggle’ and ‘from streets to the Parliament’ – featured dominantly in the Alliance’s struggle against the autocratic government. Practically, the streets defined the route to the destination, the House of Representatives. During the April protests, the street stood for a point of

convergence and solidarity. It was the place of peaceful rallies epitomizing the Alliance's main pledge for non-violent response. It was also the place of bloody clashes, injuries and deaths signifying aggression that was rooted in the regime's violent antagonism with the Maoists, who were alleged to have infiltrated the Alliance's rallies. The street further embodied enormity of mass protests, with the size of gathering reported to have crossed one million a few days before the king made his proclamation (*TKP*, "Ceasefire!").

Secondly, the country Nepal stands for a location to which the Alliance's mission statements were directed. With the active monarchy in the helm, the country featured as being under siege, in the clutches of autocracy, waiting for a rescuer like the Alliance. The parliamentary parties' activism was justifiably placed in a setting with "moribund state of democracy and peace" (*THT*, "Don't Get Lost"). Thus, in spite of their proved agency in poor governance and retarded development in the past, the Alliance achieve a protagonist self in a changed scenario by pledging to face a greater culprit, the royalists, for a good cause, the restoration of democracy.

Third, Kathmandu signifies a strategic mainstream, a determinant location in the main battle between democracy and autocracy. Kathmandu was the Alliance's main battlefield. Kathmandu is termed strategic in the sense that it mattered to the places beyond and equally depended on what happened there. If Kathmandu did not suffer, the regime would not be alarmed, and it would suffer only when highways beyond were blocked. The SPA had endorsed rural-, urban- and highway-centered protests. Kathmandu could be paralyzed forcing the high and mighty to awaken, and inducing the low-profile people to vent their frustration against an insensitive government for the lack of security and daily commodities (*THT*, "Grim Scenario").

Besides, the 27 km Ring Road that encircles the metropolitan Kathmandu forms the most important setting for the movement. The Alliance leaders understood its strategic value and planned to organize a mass encircling program on April 25. But the regime is believed to have yielded to the magnitude of people on April 21 itself. *TKP*'s comment below highlights the prominence of the Ring Road and its vicinities in the movement:

On the sixteenth day of the protest programs against the tyrannical regime emerged following the February coup, over half a million protestors encircled the 27 kilometers-long Ring Road – defying the

curfew – demanding the establishment of people’s rights. . . . The rallies organized in different parts of the capital city – Kalanki [west], Gongabu [north], Balkhu [south-west], and of course, Shamakhusi [north] – merged at Kalanki and marched defying curfew towards Satdobato [south], Koteswor and Tinkune [east] encircling the Ring Road. This forced the King to declare that he has returned power to the people. (“People’s Power”).

The Ring Road symbolizes the line of seizure, from where the regime faced the threat of belligerence from general people in the Alliance’s leadership. Apart from the points on the Ring Road like Gongabu, Kalanki and Koteswor, Kirtipur is known for people’s early moral victory over the regime, where people exerted peaceful resistance to the security forces and the latter were motivated not to use brutal force (*TKP*, “Stop Brutality”). Similarly, Singh Durbar counts among the settings where government staffs for the first time lent solidarity to the democratic movement. The upsurge in the country’s main administrative center marks a turning point of the Alliance-led movement. The areas beyond Kathmandu, especially the townships of Biratnagar, Janakpur, Pokhara and Nepalgunj are the major support bases for the main fortress of Kathmandu. These are also the convergent points for the people of urban outskirts and rural villages.

In the period following the mass protests, the Alliance occupies the scene of the mainstream, especially the House and the government. In the House, it remained unambiguously progressive. It passed resolution for CA and cleared a line of convergence with the insurgent Maoists. The House declared the country secular, snatched power from monarchy, renamed the government and the national army and thus headed for a new era, while at the same time lending mandate to the government to make progressive strides. In the government, the Alliance members initially displayed the age-old tactics of power-mongering and dillydallying. But this retarding aspect was superseded by a number of forward-looking actions. They pushed for some reformative measures such as conducting talks with Maoists, and signing a code of conduct as a prelude to an extended peace process.

The most frequent categories of symbolic cues contained in the Alliance’s narrative represent at least three different aspects. The first category reflects the political scenario in which the Alliance worked. The allusion to February ‘putsch’ or

‘coup’ or ‘takeover’ suggests a history of regression. The mention of one of these allusions reminds one of the revival of autocratic monarchy and, more interestingly, the resurgence of Panchayat-adherents, who were once believed to have reached the margin of politics. Complementary to, or the byproduct of, ‘putsch’ is the idiom ‘political deadlock.’ This alludes to the situation the Alliance partners and the Maoists were believed to have perceived in the country, which placed the king’s adamancy with undemocratically democracy-bound roadmap on the top of the list of causes. ‘Collision course’ was the result of the putsch and the deadlock. The regime that stood on the defensive, not the Alliance and the Maoists who were set for offensive, are attributed to the possible collision. But the idiom equally signals the challenge the SPA-Maoist alliance faced ahead of the TPA. Then there is ‘boycott’ plainly stated in the TPA and restated by the editorials as the SPA’s principal action against the regime. Boycotting reflected three factors: rejecting and foiling the king’s roadmap, relegating royalists and controlling violent reprisals of the Maoists.

Actions and obligations of the Alliance are represented in the second category of symbolic cues. The idiom ‘bury the hatchet’ alluding to the agreement between the SPA and Maoists best illustrates the degree of commitment the parties had shown to join hands for the people’s movement, in addition to revealing the state of intense enmity they bore for each other earlier. The phrase ‘swallow the Maoist pill’ recaptures the compulsion in which the SPA is believed to have accepted the Maoist agenda of CA only because the king had marginalized them. Then, NC-D is reported to have ‘jumped on the bandwagon’ with NC and UML, meaning that the splinter party from NC tried to customize itself in one of SPA’s fundamentals: dropping of constitutional monarchy from the party’s constitution.

The third category includes the cues suggesting the collective habits of the parties in the Alliance. For example, ‘old habits’ remind of the intra- and inter-party bickering the parliamentary leaders were known for in the past. These allude to the tug of war and tricks parties were reported to exhibit in the contest for power. The practice of ‘nepotism, cronyism, corruption and favoritism’ feature among the parties’ old habits, but was plainly unpalatable in the post-movement changed scenario. But there was no stopping in view of how vulnerable the parties proved themselves: the NC quarreled for a ‘lion’s share’ in the new cabinet, while its counterparts sulked for a reasonable portion for themselves. Then the ritual like ‘ribbon-cutting exercise’ marks one of Nepali ministers’ commonest antics while in power, the stone-laying

and program-inauguration rituals. The new ministers representing the Alliance, now with much bigger responsibility of nation-building, were well-advised not to waste their valuable times prioritizing such trivialities.

### **A Project Unsettled**

The main narrative of the CPN-M's involvement in the April Movement represents a theme of unfinished rebellion. The narrative is neither about inception nor culmination, but continuation. The signing of the TPA in a sense was only an important moment after about a decade's armed insurgency. It only marked an optimum point of seeking alternative ways, but not of making a complete shift. The end of the joint movement in House restoration was not the point where the Maoists liked to stop the mass movement. They wanted to continue with the intensity of abolishing the old order by abolishing the regime in the first place. This is why they pledged continuation of their part of the urban-based movement when the Alliance welcomed the king's proclamation. In this sense, the story of Maoist involvement in the movement is that of a project unsettled.

The dramatis persona of the Maoists includes certain polysemic referents complementing the party's formal name, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) (CPN-M). The generic phrase 'the Maoists' is one of the most recurrent neutral characters in both sets of editorials. Frequently used categories such as 'the Maoist rebels' and 'the rebels' depict their identity as an insurgent political outfit. Besides, the editorials mention familiar denominators like 'guerrillas, militias, cadres,' 'CPN-M affiliated associations,' and 'Maoist organizations.' With these referents signifying different militant characteristics, the Maoists represented the persona of 'a party that resorted to violence.' These referents portray the party largely as a rebellious front different from the parliamentary parties in the Alliance.

A discussion on the Maoists as a major actor of the movement literally involves consideration about the Maoist leadership. During the six months following the TPA, Prachanda, chairman of the CPN-M, was often mentioned in the editorial commentaries, especially those of *TKP*. His characterization, particularly mentioned with the title 'Maoist supremo', is based on his occasional featuring in interviews to media outlets. He was underground and, in fact, a sort of enigma to the general public until the evening of 16 June 2006.



One of the earliest post-TPA editorial references to Prachanda is about his interview to BBC Nepali Service. This interview which was transmitted by Radio Sagarmatha caused the royal government to close the radio. Prachanda was only “speaking about the ways to maintain peace in the country” and not about people’s war. The radio’s forced closure rather reflected the government’s dislike for the SPA-Maoist 12-point accord than its antagonism towards the ideas of the supposed ‘terrorist’ leader (“Repression”). Another instance in which Prachanda receives editorial attention was at the beginning of January 2006 when he came up to justify the end of the unilateral ceasefire. He clarified that the ceasefire had to be terminated not only for people’s democracy but also for the self-defense of the Maoist cadres. Despite such defensive posture of the Chairman, the Maoists’ decision to end the four-month long unilateral ceasefire meets with criticism from home and abroad. It is termed unfortunate.

Prior to the April uprising, Prachanda’s character as the leader of the insurgent party represents ambiguity. He often presents an image of a good man prepared to come and bring his party to a peaceful political mainstream by renouncing violence. Then his goodness would evaporate when cases of attacks and atrocities reached intensity. For example, in the wake of the breakdown of ceasefire, he pledged in a press statement that his party “would not involve in criminal activities to disrupt the municipal elections scheduled for February 8 (*TKP*, “Renounce Violence”). But the end of ceasefire marks an unfortunate resumption of violence all over the country with such apparent violation of Prachanda’s promises that polls candidates were attacked in a number of places. To quote another case, in an interview with *TKP*, he surprised the general public by expressing his party’s “intention to reconcile with the king” and anticipating positive move from the latter. This had “generated positive hopes for peace.” But in another interview to BBC, he made angry “outbursts against the king,” which simply “fizzled out the chances of reconciliation” (*TKP*, “Eluding Democracy”)

Such ambiguity between commitment and violation harmed the credibility of both Prachanda and his party. The paradox, according to *TKP*, is that he was “trying to shake off the little remaining political image of his party by following the path of a terrorist group.” On the one hand, he would regret his party’s involvement in human rights violations and impress people by “saying that his party was ready to end the conflict.” On the other hand, his cadres would carry out operations of “unacceptable

human rights violations,” consequently erasing the party’s public image marked for being prepared to come to a peaceful mainstream (“Terror Tactic”).

In the movement’s aftermath, Prachanda appears to take a more radical, resolute posture. He insisted right after the House proclamation that “the king’s wings clipping” had not been sufficient. He claimed “he would have taken action against the king and confiscated all his property” (*TKP*, “Cranky Maoists”). This outburst might have sounded more justified if he had maintained such rigidity within his party also. He is rather shown incapable of controlling his cadres, who were involved in anti-social and, even worse, “criminal activities” (*TKP*, “Peace Talks and Crime”). On his part, the supremo accused *Mandales* of “extortions in the name of Maoists” when there were complaints about Maoist atrocities. But at the same time some Maoist “functionaries” would be reported as insisting that “the party would not stop activities like collection of donations and tax and interrogation.” They had set a condition that an interim government needed to be formed at the earliest “with the involvement of the Maoists,” and then they would put an end to their usual activities (*THT*, “Forsake Rigidity”). While his ‘functionaries’ showed such signs of unrelenting contrary to the need of “confidence building measures,” Prachanda was “making explosive statements” with such threats that “his men would not hesitate to take up arms again if the government repressed his cadres” (*THT*, “Promises to Keep”). In this way, Prachanda’s personal character is more of a rebellious leader than of a politician prepared to collaborate with a pro-democratic front represented by the SPA.

Let us now observe some of the most representative attributions to the Maoists. Majority of the attributions present them as antagonists. One recurrent qualifier takes them as a very dubious group. To note the general perception of the SPA leaders, the Maoists did not keep their commitment about shunning violence and, therefore, their words could not be trusted (*TKP*, “Renounce Violence”). The international community’s impression was that since they ended ceasefire and resumed violence despite their pledges not to, they could be termed “more a terrorist outfit than a political organization” (*TKP*, “Terror Tactic”). People in general were bound to “entertain doubts about the ultimate intentions of the Maoists” on the ground that they seemed not interested in respecting right to life and had dubious political intent. The rebels were yet to “prove their bona fides in full” (*THT*, “Kiss Me Kate”). After the movement, the frequency of extortion and violation of commitments

continued in such intensity that skepticism about the Maoists gained greater validity. To lend credence to this, the Maoists disregarded the code of conduct by appearing in combats in Janakpur, in no time after the code was signed (*THT*, “The Gokarna Code”; *TKP*, “Uninvited Fissure”).

The Maoists are described as complicated to deal with throughout the whole process of negotiation during the six months. The complication lay in their being unrelenting, disgruntled, blind-folded, untamable and dictatorial. They were unrelenting in most of their stances such as in request of the SPA and the international community to extend the ceasefire (*THT*, “The Razor’s Age”). They would not stop collection of donation and tax before the movement, and would continue it after the movement as a precondition for the formation of an interim government with their own involvement. The Maoists were disgruntled after the end of the movement, “finding it difficult to own people’s victory”, the restoration of the House (*TKP*, “Cranky Maoists”), “dubbing the proclamation as a ‘deception’ and conspiracy to ‘protect’ the monarchy” (*THT*, “New Dawn”).

The Maoists were complicated because they were also blind-folded. They were obsessed with their thrust on continued rebellion to the extent of troubling potential sympathizers in the name of donation, which was something “so detrimental to their own image” (*TKP*, “Rebel Extortions”). And they were constantly demanding the dissolution of the reinstated House in a bid to move for a quick interim setup that would bring the CPN-M at par with the parliamentary parties. But they appeared to be least concerned about a possible “political vacuum” to result from the dissolution, which literally meant “offering an invite to the reactionary forces to walk in and create mischief” (*THT*, “Work Now, Fight Later”). They were untamable, especially the low-level cadres, and even “beyond the command” of their leaders including Chairman Prachanda (*TKP*, “Peace Talks and Crime”). Above all, the leaders themselves kept on setting pre-conditions and “dictating terms for talks” (*THT*, “Promises to Keep”) further complicating the Alliance’s peace mediations.

The Maoists were also subversive. In the light of their commitment to the TPA, they were expected not to violate basic values of democracy. This by no means meant their complete subjection to the then regime but that the society’s basic norms had to be respected. Although their decision to foil the municipal polls might have been justified on the ground of thwarting the regime’s project for legitimacy, “violence against polls candidates,” which surfaced as one of their anti-polls

strategies, was sheer infringement upon one's "fundamental rights to vote or boycott" (*THT*, "Schindler's Ark"). A contextually more serious aspect of subversion entailed "Maoists' inflammatory statements and atrocious demands" preceding the post-movement negotiations for mainstreaming them (*THT*, "Work Now, Fight Later"). Worst of all, they appeared unwilling to change the ways so far as party rituals were concerned no matter whether these breached their own pledge to peace process. The presence in Janakpur "of a significant number of *Khukuri*-wielding rebel cadres in battle fatigues" following their signature to the code of conduct, and a host of other "subversive activities" (*THT*, "The Gokarna Code") made general expectations about their constructive role incredulous.

While their subversive nature helped increase doubt on their commitment, their being guilty of "iniquitous acts" would somehow fail to lend them acquittal. Their decade-long people's war would be remembered in terms of the "conflict inflamed by the Maoist rebels" and as adequate to "drag them to the court." Some of their acts are taken equivalent to crimes, such as the killing of polls candidates and innocent civilians, and could "neither be ignored, nor ... let the group join the political mainstream at will" (*TKP*, "Renounce Violence"). Equally serious was the case of "disruption of the SLC exams" condemned for "endangering students' careers" and "causing trauma to many of them and their parents" (*THT*, "Undeserved Penalty"). One alarming aspect of the process of Maoists' integration into the mainstream was that their "misgivings" could not be "brushed aside in toto, judging from the past experiences" (*THT*, "New Dawn"). Since they did not show the sign of peaceful adaptation in the society after the fall of the royal government and, instead, remained "involved in heinous crimes" like extortions and secretive attacks, the question of the rationale of "inviting them to join the government" became even more daunting (*TKP*, "Peace Talks and Crime"). In formal terms, their activities were by all standards "against the spirit of the 12-point agreement" (*THT*, "Promises to Keep").

The Maoists were also characterized as weak-willed and compelled. Their continued insurgency and sporadic attacks on security installations were understood as their "lack of confidence to overthrow the royal government through a peaceful means" (*TKP*, "Unfortunate Decision"). Circumstances then equally suggested that they were unlikely to topple the government through armed insurgency alone despite the death of thousands of people in the name of 'People's War.' This could be one of the reasons why they agreed to join the alternative peaceful means of mass movement

through the signing of the TPA. The state of being compelled reflected their general plight as a party with militia preparing to make transitions into a multiparty democratic structure. This was something to induce a sympathetic, positive worldview about them. The CPN-M faced an understandable compulsion of “resorting to the donation collection drive” owing to “a serious resource crunch to sustain its cadres” and for “feeding the militia” (*THT*, “Over the Rainbow”). Though mainstreaming them underscored financial protection by the state, it was too early for the Alliance-led government to be able to finalize the support mechanisms, at least within a month following the protests. And managing support through foreign aid would hardly be a credible priority to feed the insurgents (*THT*, “Over the Rainbow”). In this sense, the Maoists had the compulsion to keep their “huge war machine” intact by collecting donations (*TKP*, “Rebel Extortions”).

No doubt, as a party committed to fighting an autocratic regime through a formal agreement with parliamentary forces, the CPN-M presented positive characteristics. The Maoist problem was widely perceived as a political problem, which could “not be resolved through military means alone” (*THT*, “Walk the Line”). Their agenda for a republican and all-inclusive state could not be flatly dismissed though their armed insurgency was widely condemned as burdensome and anachronistic to the country. For this reason, the government’s attempt to suppress them militarily was considered unrealistic and unfeasible. Any solution, in *THT*’s words, had to be permanent; a “patchwork” would never work in “dealing with the Maoists” (“Golden Handshake”). The party and its expansion in Nepal were too large for any small, fragmented initiatives though many people refused to see these political elements in it.

The CPN-M equally presented itself as a progressive force. The party was afoot to dismantle the old feudalistic system. What really called attention was not its age-old radical agenda of militarily toppling the old order; it was the shift from this agenda to collaboration with the parliamentary parties. Therefore, the party’s progressive commitment underlay its ‘political acumen’ displayed to resolve the conflict, like other parties. More importantly, the progressiveness involved its readiness to lay down the arms (*TKP*, “Unprecedented”) and to extend ceasefire having “elicited wide domestic and international positive response” (*THT*, “Touch of Wisdom”). The Maoists’ commitment to the pro-democratic alliance pointed at their readiness for serious involvement in the peace process, and it would be illogical and

haphazard to dismiss their pledges for democracy. Despite visible blotches of frequent untoward actions that potentially embittered their relations with the Alliance partners, the Maoists had pervaded the main course of history. Any talks or plan of action during the time preceding and following the movement was collaboration “not between contenders but partners” (*THT*, “Partners in Progress”). This was also a unique feature of the political transition following the movement.

One quality the Maoists frequently showed in the time following the TPA was their willingness to work for solutions albeit with conditions. They clarified they were “ready for a ceasefire any time” right after ending their four-month unilateral ceasefire. And the condition was that the SPA would have to agree to the sequence of broad political conference, an interim government and the election to CA. They showed readiness to help the SPA movement and organize peaceful showdowns and non-cooperation in Kathmandu Valley during the April protests. A general belief, according to *THT*, was that the “Maoists could be persuaded” for positive actions “through dialogue and international guarantee” (“Come Dance with Me”). They would also be “ready to *accept* the verdict of the constituent assembly election” and might even “consider agreeing to the retention of a ceremonial monarchy” (“Ameliorative Approach”) if there was broad consensus on preserving the monarchy.

Another positive aspect of the Maoist partnership in the peace process was their vigilance over the parliamentary forces. This might have been as intense or superficial as the parties’ skepticism over the Maoists’ commitment to peace process in general. The Maoists had doubts whether “the parliament restored by royal proclamation” was capable to “address demands of the *Jana Andolan*.” Since the SPA’s affection for the 1990 Constitution was subtle yet perceptible, and that they would be ready to stake anything but the parliamentary and constitutional process, it was obvious for the Maoists to “stress on constant vigilance and application of pressure” (*THT*, “Outcome’s the Key”). This is to say, their cognizance of the necessity of pressure and vigilance for ‘strings-free’ constituent assembly had some merit.

The CPN-M was by all means an indispensable entity, with exceptions of the occasional causes of skepticism attributable to the times of conflict and transition such as that of 2006. The party’s exclusion from the mainstream, or a long-drawn armed-conflict with it was “to the detriment of the country.” After all, the Maoists were also Nepalis, “emerged as a major political force, though armed” (*THT*, “Lunch with

Friends”). For parliamentary parties that were trying to garner a resultant anti-autocracy power-base, breaking off ties with the Maoists ‘would carry greater risks.’ In fact, the TPA and its revitalization in March had placed the CPN-M at the forefront as a principal change agent. The April protests lent the party an identity of a “vital political force” (*THT*, “Ameliorative Approach”) in that all changes following the House restoration made respecting the TPA and addressing Maoist agendas indispensable.

As signified in their *dramatis personae*, the Maoists present an ambiguous political character in the six months’ editorial representation. The plotlines about Maoists show them in both negative and positive identities. Apparently, their grassroots activities portray them in an antagonist image though the reports of their high level commitment sustain the persona of an indispensable political entity. The negative portrayal comprises the narratives of subversion, terrorization and self-degradation. At least one plotline represents the neutral, political aspect of their revolution. The positive side highlights discretion, commitment and conciliation.

Narratives related to subversion take a number of activities that affected general social and political atmosphere. The first in this category are extortions and forceful donations carried out even after signing the TPA. All through the months following the agreement, the Maoists were alleged to be “carrying out all sorts of anti-people activities in the name of people’s war” (*TKP*, “Desist Blockade”). Then this became a national debate in the House in the post-movement days; there were complaints of extortions inside the parliament. The trend followed the signing of the code of conduct. Moreover, the Maoists reportedly claimed certain areas “under their rule” and extorted money “on the pretext of donations” (*TKP*, “Code of Conduct”). Yet, Maoist leader Prachanda dismissed the allegation claiming that *Mandales* were involved in such activities in the name of Maoists. Coupled with the complaints of extortion was that of abduction. Even during the unilateral ceasefire, the Maoists were involved in “abduction of students, teachers and innocent villagers” (*TKP*, “Work for Peace”). Then capturing of the staffs of Surya Nepal in February annoyed the business community, whereas abduction of RNA personnel was even reported to induce RNA’s aerial raid in Nawalparasi right after the end of the movement.

A host of deviant actions were reported to have affected the ongoing peace process. According to *TKP*, attacks on poll candidates before the February municipal elections angered the regime to such extent as to “hold the polls at all costs”

("Renounce Violence"). In the same way, Prachanda's outburst against the king 'fizzled out the chances of reconciliation' and many days of blockade in March "severed the confidence of democratic forces" ("Desist Blockade"). Similarly, attack on Thankot police post in March "dampened SPA's ongoing movement" ("Ceasefire!"). Then continued extortion in the post-movement days hurt the peace process, smothered public confidence and damaged their own credibility ("Rebel Extortions"). According to *THT*, the Maoists were "subverting the democratic process to serve personal ends and the political agenda of a group or a group of individuals" ("Work Now, Fight Later"). This was evident in the way they dictated terms of talks and simultaneously disrespected the code of conduct (*THT*, "The Gokarna Code"; *TKP*, "Uninvited Fissure").

Plotlines about terror contain the narratives of violence and killings. Violence defined their character in the post-ceasefire period from January to April. The decision not to extend ceasefire in January threatened "to plunge the country into a cycle of heightened violence" (*THT*, "The Razor's Edge"). The time was marked for the threats of physical or 'people's action' against polls candidates and polling officers. The resumption of violence and crossfire between the Maoists and the state security prefaced "scenes for a bloodier picture to emerge" in the country (*THT*, "Schindler's Ark") with such foreboding that life was going to be very difficult for the general public. Violence then was synonymous to the people's war as if the Maoists were there only to "impose blockades and bandhas" and to "emit violence and anti-people activities" (*TKP*, "Desist Blockade").

There were particular cases of Maoists spreading terror. The most striking of all was their threat to schools prior to the SLC examination. In Taplejung they targeted "teachers, parents and school management officials" against conducting the examination. The threat followed "patrolling and barring students from entering the headquarters." This was an example of how insurgency had "dragged children into the quagmire of politics" (*THT*, "Undeserved Penalty") by 'endangering' their careers and subsequently traumatizing many of them and their parents. In another instance, the Maoists issued ultimatum to district presidents and vice presidents of the local bodies to resign from their posts. The Maoists also terrorized the business sector which resulted in the acceleration of "economic downfall" and "throwing more Nepalis out of jobs" (*THT*, "It's Not so Simple"). The abduction of staffs in Surya Nepal in February and the shutting down of Dabur Nepal in May were extreme cases



of harassment to the industrial sector. The Maoists were, therefore, to blame for causing “two thirds of the small and medium-size industries” to shut down in the name of labor justice ever since the launching of the people’s war (*TKP*, “Jungle Raj”). In the post-movement period, which was meant for gradual recovery of economic sector from the ill-effects of insurgency, the Maoists were rather expected to realize that what they had been advocating as the workers’ rights was ‘destroying the country’s fragile economy.’

Terror was the country’s fate during the insurgency, and when the Maoists ended ceasefire in January. The breakdown of ceasefire prior to the municipal polls which the Maoists had pledged to foil at any cost had “spurred a great apprehension among the people” (*TKP*, “Right to Life”). What’s more, the Maoists attacked several polls candidates and killed one in Janakpur. Such aggression towards individual candidates sufficed to spread fear among both the rural and urban populace. People already could experience to have fallen into the trap of civil war due to Maoist and state violence (*TKP*, “Desist Blockade”). The offensives by Maoists aggravated that fear into terror. In the local level, “politics of terror and intimidation” became an everyday reality (*THT*, “Over the Rainbow”) even though peace process was on track in the mainstream.

Two plotlines show extreme manifestation of terrorization during the six-month period: criminalization and killing. These were manifestations of the trend of carrying guns and shooting people. This was largely “the outcome of the decade-long Maoist insurgency.” The Maoists “looted banks and accelerated their extortion” during the people’s war, and even when the process of their integration into the mainstream was underway (*TKP*, “Peace Talks and Crime”). Most of their actions could be forgotten as the fallouts of a long-drawn insurgency in which the state was equally involved. But atrocities like abductions and killings were liable to drag them to the court in the ensuing days (*TKP*, “Renounce Violence”). They had killed ordinary people and political cadres besides the security persons against whom they launched attacks. Among the ordinary people thus victimized were “innocent relatives of those who were in the armed forces” and any “innocent villagers suspected to be informants” (*TKP*, “Work for Peace”). There were also cases in which people were abducted, tortured, and “forced to join Maoist militia” (*THT*, “Undeserved Penalty”). The toll of over 12000 deaths by the end of the movement did not necessarily include only those who were genuinely involved in the military warfare (*TKP*, “Ceasefire!”).

The number underscored the “spate of killings, bomb blasts, kidnappings and extortions” carried out by the Maoists (*THT*, “Tulips Can Grow”).

Some of the cases of killing took the members of political parties. One striking evidence was the gunning down of the district president of Nepal Sadbhavana Party, a mayoral candidate for the municipal polls from Janakpur (*THT*, “Poll Dilemma”; *TKP*, “Renounce Violence”). And the killing of security persons in nocturnal raids and other sporadic encounters was integral to the people’s war. One major case to have occurred during the six-month period was “a massive midnight attack” in Tansen, the Headquarters of Palpa, a district in the mid-west. This resulted in “killing a number of security personnel and sending more missing” and also the destruction of “several government offices” (*THT*, “Same Time Last Year”). Also, places like Rupandehi, Kavre, Chautara, Malangawa, Butwal, Taulihawa among others feature in the editorials as largely hit in Maoist attacks and subsequent crossfires. These attacks suffice to disprove the claim of the king and his ministers that the Maoists had been militarily emaciated during the royal regime.

The aforementioned plotlines show the Maoists subject to critical scrutiny as far as their written commitment for peaceful change is considered. But their critical actions also imply their self-degradation. Their termination of ceasefire in January in spite of widespread urge from the Alliance leaders and the international well-wishers caused loss of faith on them even though they insisted having resumed the military offensives in “the self-defense of their cadres.” The breakdown of ceasefire was widely lampooned as a “blunder on their part” (*TKP*, “Unfortunate Decision”). Continued atrocities, especially meddling with the business community and other human rights violations, only ruined their credibility and lent credence to the claim of the royalists and some foreign actors (such as Americans) that the party was more of a “terrorist outfit” than a political front (*TKP*, “Terror Tactic”). In the post-movement transitions, they carried out a number of acts like continuing extortions, intervening the business sector, setting pre-conditions for talks like dissolution of the House and, above all, violating the code of conduct. These might have added authority to their revolutionary and uncompromising identity, but equally caused them to “lose people’s trust” (*THT*, “The Gokarna Code”). Especially those who wanted a legal, organized and widely acceptable political framework for managing the transitions would not be prepared to attest to the Maoist ways.

Representation of the armed insurgency as a people's revolution was a talk of the day during the six-month period. This representation almost melted into the peaceful uprising of April as the revolution of Nepali people. The aforesaid plotlines explain the darker aspects of Maoist revolution mainly preceding the mass movement. On a more neutral plane, and as suggestive of their political roadmap, the revolution implies at least five complementary aspects. First, the Maoists were rigid. They did not relent in their demands for CA. Second, they always expanded. In other words, they always "managed to find more recruits than deserters" despite any strategies of temptation applied by the government (*THT*, "Golden Handshake"). Third, they had a radical thrust in their demands. For example, they did not want the restoration of House, a compromise, albeit transitional, with the old system. They wanted "downright formation of an interim government" to move towards the CA elections (*THT*, "Forgotten Frontier").

The thrust for continuing the movement marked the fourth aspect of their revolution. When the SPA ended the movement, the Maoists publicized their decision to "keep the pot of peaceful *Jana Andolan* boiling" (*THT*, "New Dawn"). Even when the restored House indicated the fulfillment of their demand by passing resolutions for CA while the Alliance-led government worked on the negotiation process, the Maoists alternated their warnings between going back to jungle and waging a different kind of revolution if their demands were not met (*TKP*, "Cranky Maoists"). Fifth, they liked to impose radical plans. This aspect included the demand of the "formation of republican fronts throughout the country" and "establishing autonomous self-governing local bodies without going to election" (*TKP*, "Uninvited Fissure"). These demands did not at all comply with the ongoing peace process that followed SPA's roadmap through a legislative and executive route. But these might equally have been a part of the Maoists' strategy of pressure to the Alliance whom they only partly believed to work in detachment from the old order.

The Maoists' positive aspects are represented in the plotlines suggesting discretion, commitment and conciliation. Discretion entails their "political acumen" and display of "immense political maturity and responsibility" evidenced by a decision to "lay off the gun" when they signed the TPA with the Alliance (*TKP*, "Unprecedented"). In addition, their readiness to extend ceasefire to facilitate the positive impact of the TPA proves their power of discretion. The ceasefire was remembered for "reduced unlawful killings in the country" (*TKP*, "Work for Peace")

with such consequence that the optimistic records on peace “almost vilified the state as a warmonger” (*TKP*, “Ceasefire”). Moreover, the Maoist decision for ceasefire “elicited wide domestic and international positive response including support from India, the US and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan” (*THT*, “Touch of Wisdom”).

Commitment complements the aspect of discretion. The signing of the TPA suggested their “commitment to multiparty democracy and human rights.” The Maoists’ readiness to be a part of the democratic system helped take the peace process quite far (*THT*, “As the World Turns”). They went for a “renewal of commitment of the 12-point agreement” (*TKP*, “Ceasefire!”) by positively responding to “the alliance’s appeal for support to its peaceful protest program” (*THT*, “Dissent Is Democracy”). For this, they announced an indefinite ceasefire in the Kathmandu Valley. They joined the movement and consolidated the protests. Their forceful involvement led to the movement’s success and lent credit to the SPA. Their biggest commitment was for a forthright move to republicanism, and had therefore “agreed to strings-free constituent assembly” (*THT*, “New Dawn”). They demanded their direct involvement in the peace process, urged the Alliance-led government to clear the route of their entry into the system through an interim government. But they kept on exerting pressure on the government such as by “lifting the blockade with two day’s deadline” right after the restoration of the House. This accompanied a “unilateral declaration of the three-month ceasefire” (*THT*, “No Riding Again”). They were ready for confidence building measures, and anticipated the same extent of commitment from the Alliance.

The CPN-M’s involvement in the peace process showed its power for conciliation with other change agents. Its political vision in this respect was the readiness in “finding a permanent political settlement” (*THT*, “As the World Turns”) of the two-pronged crisis in which Maoist insurgency and royalist autocracy had retarded the country’s modernization. The Maoists’ conciliation with pro-democratic parliamentary front through the November peace agreement had “generated positive hopes for peace” (*TKP*, “Eluding Democracy”). As a proof of their concrete involvement, they “called for an international role” for political settlement (*THT*, “Kiss Me Kate”), which was to ensure a more neutral and object-oriented integration process. Similarly, following the House’s resolution for constituent assembly, they forwarded a “10-point roadmap to peace.” The government was bound to reciprocate this overture for “a genuine negotiation” (*THT*, “House Made of Dawn”). This

conciliatory relation with the Alliance leaders and readiness for “a productive dialogue” with the Alliance-led government characterizes the Maoists’ political stature in the post-movement time. This way the partners in peace could help “evolve a common vision” for change (*THT*, “Promises to Keep”). Conciliation was therefore the principal basis for stability out of the chaos of transition in the movement’s aftermath.

The settings for Maoist narratives are varied. In the first place, Nepal featured as a country to have drawn international attention due to Maoist insurgency. The Maoists’ legitimacy as a recognizable force came as Nepalis more than as an insurgent group. Nepal’s prosperity was the major ideal for conciliation and collaboration between the Maoists and the parliamentary forces. Nepal is also personified as being in tension and terror in that the Maoist ceasefire gave it a ‘considerable relief’ by reducing killings and violence. In contrast, the end of ceasefire in January portrayed the country to have been ‘gripped’ in fear. More importantly, Nepal signified incompatibility of both insurgency and autocracy. Peaceful movement and democracy were compatible, and the April Movement proved this.

‘Jungle’ presents a meaningful setting for the narrative on Maoists. The jungle represents the contingent or transitory aspect of Maoist rebellion because the ultimate goal of Maoist rebellion was to leave the jungle. Their promise of making political shift from jungle to the mainstream evoked relief and hope in the country at that time. The royal government’s non-reciprocation to the Maoist ceasefire clarified its intention to send and keep them there. From the point of view of the government’s intention, the Maoists’ return to the jungle would mean an opportunity for arms transaction with foreign dealers and subsequent insurrection in the name of fighting terrorism (*TKP*, “Audacious Remark”). For the Alliance, it would mean a mid-way fiasco from fighting autocracy and for general people a plunge into the cycle of terror and uncertainty. Also, the setting of Kathmandu valley bears identical semantic value in the Maoist narratives. In the annals of their insurgency against the regime, it is the main strategic point to challenge the latter’s power and arrogance by frequent strikes and embargoes. Their presence in the mass protests was defined by the royal government as infiltration. Thus, Kathmandu signifies a strategic anti-Maoist space for the royal regime. In their relation with the SPA, ceasefire in Kathmandu meant solidarity to the April protests. Later, their presence in Kathmandu embodied

pressure to the Alliance-led government apart from signifying their gradual shift to the mainstream life.

A number of other settings present the aspects of insurgency and violence. Within the Kathmandu valley, Lalitpur features first, for the Maoist attack of a mayoral candidate, Dal Bahadur Rai, prior to the February municipal polls. Similarly, Thankot and Dadhikot carry the story of attacks on police posts. These were cases alleged to have strengthened the hands of the king by dampening the ongoing movement (*TKP*, “Ceasefire”) and causing night curfews in Kathmandu (*THT*, “Turning Point”). Outside Kathmandu valley, Janakpur was known for the gunning down of a mayoral aspirant, Bijaya Lal Dash, a candidate of Nepal Sadbhavana Party, before the municipal polls. Then in Janakpur the Maoists breached the just-signed code of conduct with a presence of ‘a significant number of Khukuri-wielding rebel cadres in battle fatigue.’ In addition, Taplejung and Dailekh were known for the Maoists’ interference in the SLC examination centers. In Taplejung they tried to prevent examinees from taking examinations. In Dailekh, they reportedly blasted a bomb at an examination center. Then, the Maoists blasted bombs in Pokhara and Nepalgunj killing and injuring ordinary people. Similarly, Tansen, Rupandehi, Kavre, Chautara, Malangawa, Butwal, and Taulihawa faced military attacks at different times following the end of ceasefire in January. Overall, the above cases of attacks and encounters imply pervasion of Maoist insurgency during the months following the TPA.

At least four types of symbolic cues define the Maoist narratives. The first type associate them with insurgency and clash with the regime. The phrase ‘spine of terrorism’ describes Maoists in juxtaposition with the security forces. The phrase also reminds of Tulsi Giri, the vice chair of the monarch-led council of ministers, who claimed to have succeeded in incapacitating the Maoist insurgency by breaking the ‘spine of terrorism.’ Another popular phrase, ‘capturing state power through the barrel of gun’ equates the Maoists with the royal regime (*TKP*, “Desist Blockade”), in terms of their love for arms and detachment from peace-loving people. In the same way, ‘hitting the establishment in the head by stepping on its back’ (*THT*, “The Great Divide”), picks a common Maoist cue for eliminating opponents during the insurgency period – ‘Step on the back and hit on the head.’

The phrase ‘Maoist pill’ beautifully recaptures the Alliance’s frustration with the royal government. It means that the Alliance leaders were obliged to accept the

Maoist agenda of CA simply because the king had dumped them to the margin. Then, at least two expressions cue the royal government's contradictory strategies towards the Maoists. The first, 'pecuniary carrots' signifies the government's trick of luring Maoist leaders and cadres with financial incentives. And there is TADO to set right those who refused to accept the carrots. With TADO the government aimed to capture and torture anyone known to be a Maoist cadre, and silence any anti-royalist in charge of a 'terrorist' association with the Maoists.

At least three expressions cue the Maoists in totality. The first characterizes the CPN-M as a 'huge war machine' implying their monstrosity and insatiability with daily resources. The hugeness reflected, and somehow justified, the Maoists' continuous attempts for drawing donation money from individuals and business sectors in the post-movement days. Then, 'jungle' repetitively signifies the root of the history of Maoist struggle, embodying a location away from familiar capitalist dwellings. The jungle, not necessarily a forest, is a strategic point both of return and departure. The Maoists' return to jungle then meant the resumption of armed conflict. Their departure from there marked the completion of peace process. Finally, the phrase 'a different kind of revolution' entails a modified form of struggle, which the Maoists pledged to continue even after entering the process of being mainstreamed. One aspect of that revolution had to do with carrying out street protests, demanding labor justice in workplaces and collecting donations for the party. But this form of revolution very often meets with wide castigation having been described as subversive and criminal.

### **Downfall of a Usurper**

The editorials portray the royal regime as the main antagonist in the movement. The monarch who led the regime is shown devoid of nobility with which highbrows and royals are generally attributed. In the post-TPA scenario, the regime's narrative shows its transition through three forms of villainy. First, it dismissed the TPA as the making of foreigners for the sake of terrorists (CPN-M) and their accomplices (SPA). Second, it remained adamant in its roadmap and pushed for the municipal elections inviting greater pressure from the SPA, who were set to boycott the polls; CPN-M, who had pledged to foil the polls at all costs; and the international community, who appealed for the postponement of the polls to avoid violent confrontations. Third, it chose the path of violent resistance as soon as protests began

in April. The regime's aggression marks the final phase of the movement drama. This also projects the popular hero vs. villain sequels involving the gradual decline and fall of the villain. The regime crumbles to the force of the movement, to a large extent failing to evoke any sense of sympathy.

The papers describe the monarch-led regime in diverse *dramatis personae*, which literally portray the regime as the major villain in the drama of April movement. The regime's character is categorized as an institution and a person. The regime as an institution is first seen as a neutral, generic entity such as 'the establishment,' '237 year old institution,' 'the palace,' and 'the government.' Secondly, it is given a number of attributions signifying its villainous persona. These include 'royal regime,' 'royal government,' 'king's government' showing a 'royal' aspect of the regime; and 'autocratic monarchy,' 'autocratic regime,' and 'active monarchy' depicting its political and non-democratic aspects.

While the above institutional character types present the regime as a powerful, indomitable authority, a number of other attributions show it in a poorer image. For example, for *THT* it is a 'lame-duck arrangement' hanging on 'half a dozen freshly anointed parties ... formed by tiny groups with vested interests' and an 'unelected and therefore unaccountable government' with no ability to 'think and act right.' For *TKP* it is a 'poor royal government,' a 'regime of puppets,' an 'insecure, weak and undemocratic regime ... supported by gun-totting and sycophant slaves' and an 'illegitimate regime.'

The character types of persons appear in three metonymic representations of the regime. The first type involves the generic collectivities of individuals surrounding and supporting the regime. For example, "any reactionary forces" and "elements of regression" (*TKP*, "Unprecedented") refer to the common anti-democratic political wing which supported and backed the royal takeover. This is also named the "pseudo-elite group" who were the "power mongers" or "sycophants" that had suddenly risen to limelight with the activism of the monarchy. Even more descriptive than these are "people accountable to only a small group" (*TKP*, "Handpicked Loyalists"), and "any clan that projects itself as savior of the people" (*TKP*, "FSU Elections"). These describe the members of the royal family and their close supporters who acted for mutual preservation, but not for the country at large. Besides, these character types hint at the regime to have constituted a small minority of self-centered elites.



Apart from the seemingly familiar attributions as groups, the composites of the regime persona were also categorized in broader, non-specialized terms. People in this type are “those day-dreamers” (*TKP*, “Poor Show”), meaning the royalists who believed to be able to reverse the political era by establishing active monarchy such as that of the Panchayat period. Similarly, ‘people in this unelected and lame-duck arrangement’ (*THT*, “High Noon High”), stand for those who assumed positions out of a democratic, electoral process. Two relatively more deplorable character types in the non-specific categories include “Nepalis who have committed crimes” (*TKP*, “Human Casualties”), and “those who embezzled state treasury,” the “antinationalist” group (*TKP*, “Misappropriation”). These types thus represent the royal activists, who violated the right to life by being the cause of death and torture, and to that end misappropriated the state coffer.

The second person type involves the unnamed but identifiable characters. The first of this class are the royals, “pseudo divine figures” (*TKP*, “Stop Brutality”). This class is represented by the king himself, anachronistic for their claim of divinity now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (*THT*, “Clowning Glory”). The other identifiable character types are the “pro-establishment figures” (*THT*, “The Usual Suspects”) who backed the monarch-led regime and who were recognized for their royalist connections. The types, in *TKP*’s terms, are “corrupt leaders handpicked by the king,” those few “feudal fiats headed by the king” (“Corrupt System”), “royal stooges” (“Camouflaged Repression”) or “royal henchmen” (“Turning Point”) and, more specifically, “handpicked ministers and the top brass of the security forces” (“Misappropriation”). For *THT*, they are the ‘unelected bunch’ that sat in judgement for what media should or should not do (“After All These Months”) or the ministers “engaged in pointless rhetoric” (“Angle of Repose”, 18 Apr. 2006).

The third category of person types includes popular names and signifiers of the monarchy and its supporters. The papers mention King Gyanendra or “Chairman cum King Gyanendra” constantly as the leader of the royal regime. In the same way, “King,” “monarch,” “Hindu monarch” and “Shah rulers” signify the neutrally accepted character of the royalty, while “the diehard feudal in power” (*TKP*, “People’s Voice”), and “boss” (*THT*, “Dead Man Walking”) suggest a more critical aspect of royal leadership. A comparatively more sarcastic qualifier characterizes the king as a Nero (*TKP*, “Curfew State”), where he is described as completely indifferent towards the incidents of violence and deaths during the protests.

Apart from the king himself, a number of known members of the king-led regime feature very often in the editorials. Most popular among these names are Dr. Tulsi Giri, the then vice Chairman in the Council of Ministers, described by *TKP* as “firebrand anti-democratic leader” (“Audacious Remark”) and by *THT* as a man with “Panchayat mindset” (“Ordinary Mind”). Another familiar character is Kamal Thapa, the Home Minister during the movement, portrayed as a repressive and most persistent member in the Council of Ministers representing the government’s aggressive line (*THT*, “Turning Point”). Lok Man Singh Karki, the Chief Secretary of the government in the king’s regime, stands as a “diehard royalist, who superseded his seniors to grab the position” (*TKP*, “Handpicked Loyalists”). Similarly, other names that got mention in the editorials as the regime’s representatives are Ramesh Nath Pandey, Tanka Dhakal, Srisha Shamsher, and Radha Krishna Mainali from among the royalist ministers, and Satchit Shamsher Rana and Parshu Narayan Chaudhary from among the Raj Parishad Standing Committee.

The narrative of downfall depicts the regime broadly as guilty and exposed and thus challenged, isolated and defeated. These attributes and all the aforesaid character types evidence its anti-democratic and villainous persona. The editorials, in fact, reflect the popular perceptions of the time regarding the identity of the regime. Following the takeover of February 2005, the royalist camp was widely identified in the country as villains, whereas the supporters of fundamental rights and democratic republic were adored as heroes (Pahadi 59). According to Chaitanya Mishra, the SPA and the Maoists were “the two principal protagonists of the April political movement” (2). This is to say, the regime, the king who was its leader and his stalwarts, who were against parliamentary democracy and the pro-democratic force led by the SPA, formed the major antagonistic regiment in the April Movement (Hachhethu, Kumar and Subedi 19).

The regime’s guilt is primarily linked to the king’s non-performance in the sense of earning the veneration accorded to a ruler, let alone as a divine figure. The ‘pro-palace people’ had all the time claimed legitimacy of the royal government’s orders and ordinances with the logic that “a Hindu monarch has the authority to issue orders” (*THT*, “Clowning Glory”). But constant display of the lack of sensibility towards the crisis of insurgency sufficed to dismiss as anachronistic the royalist claim for the monarch’s divine presence. So, it would not be inappropriate to say, “No human being has managed to convince the people that he is a divine figure in this

century” (*TKP*, “Stop Brutality”). In the same way, the royalists’ argument that a Hindu monarch could supersede the Constitution meant advocating “the rule of the jungle.” In the “21<sup>st</sup> century” hardly anyone would be prepared to attest to the “divine right of kings” (*THT*, “Clowning Glory”). A majority of the people were aware that only ‘pseudo-divine figures’ who did not shrink from “heinous crimes” made hue and cry about their divinity (*TKP*, “Stop Brutality”).

The regime is guilty in a number of ways. According to *TKP*, the first guilt was the subjection of Nepalis to such level of abjection that they could even not afford safety from a cold wave in the winter (“Cold Wave”). The second was intensifying war and causing death of innocent people, which was an act tantamount to that of “war criminals” (“Human Casualties”). Since, “unfortunately,” the king’s political stance had been “confrontational,” the country was pushed to “more bloodshed” (“February One”). The contagion of crime had affected the security forces as well in that they enjoyed “impunity under the current regime” by “killing innocent civilians” (“Sheer Madness”). While the common civilians were subjected to impunity, political leaders were prime targets of detention. The result was that the country had been “sucked into the vortex of violence” (“Political Detention”).

The TPA registered the royal regime as the main root of crisis in Nepal. Its signatories, the SPA and the CPN-M, were unanimous in their judgement of the regime’s being the main impediment in the prosperity of the country. When the country appeared to resolve tensions following the agreement between major political actors, the king-led regime stood as the main deterrent. The convergence of the parties and the Maoists automatically projected the regime “as the major stumbling block to peace and democracy” (*THT*, “Come with the Wind”, “Hell-Bent for Heaven”). The case was true for a situation when political actors had created a visible anti-regression force to push for a decisive movement. And whether the situation would lead to confrontation relied upon the regime’s response to the agendas of the TPA. Since the regime did not seem to make any positive strategy for the impending pressure, it was understood to have taken a retaliating posture. This is to say, the king-led establishment proved itself as what *THT* called the “root of the present confrontation” for its “refusal ... to recognize democracy in the universally accepted sense of the term” (“Love Me Tender”). The consequence was that the country was to witness further “aggressive course of the government” which was “certain to escalate conflict and deepen instability further” (“Fire in the Lake”).

The conflict worsened in April and the regime further proved itself the main cause of crisis by taking a more confrontational route. When protests started early that month, and when curfews became the routines, the country, in *TKP*'s terms, moved "virtually in the state of disarray" as much as "in flame" ("Curfew State"). King Gyanendra, who had "usurped all the state authority" was primarily to blame for pushing the country to "a deep political crisis" ("Time's Run Out"). The crisis resulted in people's antagonism against the regime to such degree that they were "not going to compromise with anything less than *Loktantra* ..." ("King's Open Door").

The post-TPA political developments were bound to be anti-establishment since the TPA had promised an earliest possible and collective rebellion to establish total democracy in the country. The regime was exposed to a big challenge by the formation of a bi-polar situation following the TPA. The challenges varied in terms of sources and repercussions. Though being challenged does not necessary reflect the regime's villainous character, this aspect is worthy of note in that it depicts the degree of vulnerability the villain faced. The state of vulnerability either proves the weakening condition of the regime, or the consolidation of the anti-establishment front to the level of overpowering the establishment.

Thus, the TPA caused the first major threat to the regime. It prioritized boycotting of the civic polls as the prelude to the major resistance thereby posing "tough choices" to the regime. On the one hand, it would be unworthy to enforce the election without the participation of political parties that represented majority of the country's politically conscious population. On the other hand, even if people desired to participate as part of their civic duty, the threat of Maoist reprisal would deter them from filing candidature or going to polling booths to cast vote. Thus the TPA had put the government "in direct confrontation with the parties" so much so that the fate of monarchy itself had been left undecided (*THT*, "Come with the Wind"). Whether or not monarchy would survive depended on what political consideration it would accord to itself from the mainstream parties if they got victorious in their anti-monarchy movement.

But the government did not seem willing to make any positive overtures to peace from its own side. Its resistance to positive political development such as the Maoist ceasefire exposed it as the main deterrent to peace process initiated in the post-TPA phase. The royal government was apparently "under increasing domestic and international pressure to take concrete steps" to grasp the opportunity for political

negotiation with the parliamentary forces (*THT*, “Touch of Wisdom”). But for the regime that aimed to sideline parliamentarians, the urge for inclusive political settlement was, however, tantamount to surrender. It would rather keep trying to hold its ground without the political parties, who on their part were all set to uproot the monarch-led regime through the force of a movement. On its own part, the regime had “unfortunately” compromised “the moral force with which the monarchy as non-executive institution could have inspired good deeds in the country” by allowing itself to be “dragged too deeply into the wheeling and dealing of dirty politics of power” from as early as October 2002 (*THT*, “Salvaging Act”). In the eyes of general people, monarchy appeared to presume the image of a commonplace political wing in contest with other familiar wings, devoid of self-esteem usually reserved for the royalty.

The political front was naturally antagonistic towards the regime and was waiting for an opportunity of rebellion in addition to organizing sporadic protests. But the government had its foes within the system itself. The first major structural jolt came from the judiciary. The SC passed a stay order against the banning of FM newscast in December 2005 for the first time indicating its resistance to the government and conveying that “no autocratic dictator will ever succeed in hijacking people’s rights (*TKP*, “Landmark Order”). The order came in a way to add impetus to the parties’ convergence after the TPA pointing at further increase of rebellion from within and outside the system. The order, therefore, constituted “a major setback for the government” and “compromised the government’s already weakened public position” (*THT*, “Stars Are Born”). The SC hit the government with another significant defiance in February 2006. It scrapped the much controversial RCCC declaring it unconstitutional. The verdict “severely weakened the legal basis” of the royal government” (*THT*, “Loud and Clear”). The verdict also indicated that the royal government had gradually proved unfit in the post-1990 constitutional structure; the court was still in a position to thwart the legitimacy of the government’s undertakings.

The situation surrounding the February municipal polls exposed the royal government’s helplessness in a number of ways. The election was unlikely to receive sufficient number of candidates, let alone the voters, and was unlikely to be a representative practice. The main reason for its failure was that it was “boycotted by all the mainstream political parties, derided by the civil society and others, and of doubtful value in the eyes of the international community.” Amid this situation, the government displayed the state of being in a difficult situation by announcing

insurance covers to polls candidates (*THT*, “No Laughing Matter”). The insurance provision only conveyed that the prospective candidates would be given compensation for any loss or damage, not that they were safe to contest the election. The government would have to keep the candidates “under armed protection at all times” (*THT*, “Schindler’s Ark”), which it would not be able to do. How would candidates under strict military tutelage be recognized by voters, and be able to garner genuine votes? The enforcement of municipal polls, therefore, faced the lack of domestic and international credibility. This proved that the government was in a crisis of legitimacy and self-respect.

The regime, however, was aware of the atmosphere of confrontation in the post-TPA months. It was in a position to exert all possible measures to dispel the force of political rebellion. The second SPA-Maoist understanding posed an immediate alarm. The SPA made public their protest programs in April and the Maoists showed commitment to support the protest. Like during the “bad old days of Panchayat” the government was in “terror of dissent,” and it accelerated detention of political leaders. (*THT*, “Daylight Grab”). Its fear of defeat became so intense during the nineteen-day protests that the security retaliations became synonymous to government’s every day executive activities. Thus, the regime appeared to have “taken refuge under the Royal Nepalese Army.” It reached this stage “after it lost moral, ideological and traditional support base” (*TKP*, “Curfew State”). Moreover, the upsurge of mass which defied curfews and other security impositions had “panicked the royalists” (*TKP*, “Whose Infiltration?”) and the regime at large. In this way, the regime looked weakened by the force of the movement.

In the post-TPA times, the royal regime was gradually isolated in the national and international scenario. As early as December 2005, when the TPA finalized the formation of a strong anti-government alliance and declared boycotting the municipal polls scheduled for February 2006, “only a handful of royalists” were “rallying behind the king to hold the polls” (*TKP*, “Offensive Order”). This is to say, the establishment was literally cornered away from the mainstream political front and was “totally isolated” (*THT*, “Angle of Repose”, 18 Apr. 2006). It was able to garner credit to its much disseminated rhetoric of fighting terrorism, while in reality it was intent on abolishing democracy by eliminating political parties. The main reason for this lack of credit was that “neither the domestic nor the international audience [was] likely to go along with its war on terror” (*THT*, “Come with the Wind”; “As the World Turns”).

Towards the end of March 2006, even the business community and Nepali diaspora got disillusioned by the regime for its failure to meet the commitments to establish peace and harmony in the country (*TKP*, “Disillusioned”; “Diaspora’s Realization”). When the April protests reached a height, the condition was such that the royal regime was “deserted by the international community, challenged by the Supreme Court and rejected by the general public” (*TKP*, “Curfew State”).

With such backdrop the regime moved to the state of crumbling. The signs of downfall had surfaced as early as December when the expansion of cabinet with people like Kamal Thapa and Shrishya Shamsar did not improve the regime’s eroded image. The TPA seemed to lend such psychological boost to the people that “no gun [could] hold them for long” (*TKP*, “Unprecedented”). Induction of Kamal Thapa in the government was meant to suggest a space for all political parties in the monarch-led regime. But Thapa, who had just split from RPP, with a group of die-hard royalists, could not present himself as a good model to join the government. Thus, the king’s desire to woo the parliamentary parties into his cabinet “remained unfulfilled” (*TKP*, “Relentless Move”). In the same way, the king’s emphasis on municipal polls was “unlikely to lead to reconciliation” (*THT*, “Touch of Wisdom”). The more he acted towards consolidating the royalist front, the farther he pushed the parliamentary parties from any ground for reconciliation. What’s more, he was indirectly helping in the consolidation of a republican opposition; his actions were “leading the country towards republicanism” (*TKP*, “Message of Jan 21<sup>st</sup>”).

The irony behind the king’s insistence on resisting political opposition is that he was fighting with his own people. And it could in no way be justified in its plan to remain intact against people’s desire to sideline it for a representative democratic government. After all, “How many monarchies [had] won a war with their own people?” (*TKP*, “February One”). Midway in the April protests, the regime’s condition was vulnerable. Whatever it did, it was “not going to sustain for long” since it was “fighting a losing war” (*TKP*, “Curfew State”). The force of agitation was so great that the king was not in a position to “fulfill his desire to become an absolute monarch” and that there was a “possibility of the monarchy bidding adieu to the country.” In other words, “no military, political party and foreign power” would now be able to “make the people loyal towards the royal regime” (*TKP*, “On the Threshold”).

As the protests continued in mid April, civil servants joined the movement: “to put an end to the brutal regime.” Such defiance from within the government system “hit the nerve of this regime.” It was “gradually crumbling” and “no royal henchmen” could defend it from the growing “anti-monarchy wave” which was even “likely to sweep away the institution of monarchy.” The crumbling was inevitable as the king’s position was already “damaged beyond repair,” especially due to the poor show in the municipal polls (*TKP*, “Turning Point”). The movement spread all over the country, and the capital’s 27 km Ring Road began to see people in millions. The regime continued to resist the protests with brutal violence instead of directly addressing the political parties. But it looked as if the king was “waiting for a political disaster” by continuing to “play with fire,” the fire of agitation (*TKP*, “Time’s Run Out”). The regime was going to find it hard to protect the 237 year old institution of monarchy.

In April, events ensued rapidly and to the extent not expected by the regime. In fact, “the tidal wave of prodemocracy protests” was too strong to be tamed by a brutal force. Since the existence of the institution of monarchy itself was in question “the possibility of keeping the ceremonial monarchy [was] even more remote” (*THT*, “The Forgotten Frontier”). There was no sign of the king’s supporters behaving sensibly. The ministers “engaged in volatile but pointless rhetoric against the pro-democracy camp” did not bother to know that “their insensitivity” was going to “compromise the survivability of the monarchy” (*THT*, “Angle of Repose”, 18 Apr. 2006). The king himself appeared not to “show this quality [of statesmanship] more than anybody else” even when the institution he represented stood to lose if he did not “act immediately by respecting the popular will” (*THT*, “The Age of Change”).

The monarch-led regime was ultimately defeated. The defeat culminated from a number of failures. The first of such failure was that of its “terrorism card” which had “largely failed to take the international community...” (*THT*, “Come with the Wind”). The king’s one year rule itself had met such a sorry fate that he had not “a single reason to celebrate” its anniversary in 2006. In the one year of direct rule, “[F]iscal discipline became a laughing stock” since “the monarch himself failed to maintain transparency.” The “February one gamble” had proved “suicidal for the monarchy” (*TKP*, “February One”). Moreover, the “poor royal government” wasted millions for the municipal election but could not “save its election show from being a total failure and a farce” (*TKP*, “Poor Show”). And the “fiasco of civic polls” only led



the country and the people “to an uncertain future” (*THT*, “Loud and Clear”), which also indicated the regime’s failure to ensure good governance.

The regime was defeated twice by the SC: first, by the stay order against the ban on FM radios, and second by the dissolution of the RCCC. The actual defeated persona came into sight when the king made the April 24 proclamation of restoring the House. This is when the pro-democratic front led by the SPA “brought the king to his knees” (*TKP*, “Ceasefire!”). The convergence of half a million people in the streets, in SPA’s call for a movement, forced the monarch to confess that the country’s sovereign power was with the people. Later, the post-movement government formed by the SPA staged a final blow to the defeated monarch. The House stripped the monarchy off all authority and erstwhile prowess.

The regime is best characterized with plotlines that collectively signify the act of usurpation thereby portraying the king as a usurper and his defeat as the defeat of the usurper. Common signifiers like “February 1 putsch,” “February royal putsch,” “the royal takeover,” “the royal coup,” and “February One coup” illustrate this aspect. More specifically, with the February 2005 move, King Gyanendra had “usurped power in the pretext of strengthening democracy...,” and “smothered the democratic space” (*TKP*, “Desist Blockade”). So, the king’s claim to retract good governance contradicted with the “hijacking” of the Constitution (*THT*, “Better Now than Never”) and of people’s rights (*TKP*, “Landmark Order”). That the king had “overstepped the constitutional boundary and sacked a democratically elected prime minister” (*TKP*, “Eluding Democracy”), in October 2002 and “seized absolute power” in February 2005 introducing a direct monarch-led rule illustrated his tendency to usurp the entire system towards a party-less regime (*TKP*, “Int’l Community”).

The regime, with the usurper as its head, is portrayed in connection with six major plotlines: repression, disruption, corruption, gamble, disregard and defeat. Repression involves a number of actions related to denigration of multiparty democracy (*THT*, “Twilight Rhetoric”). Treating parliamentary parties at par with CPN-M, threatening them with stern action for their association with the latter and suppressing the independent media with an intention to wipe them out (*TKP*, “Camouflaged Repression”) count among the regime’s worst anti-democratic actions. The regime as such was acting with a sense of vendetta for almost no other apparent reason than that the parliamentary parties had signed agreement with the CPN-M and were demanding the restoration of parliamentary system. Repression, therefore, was

bound to take the form of reliance on force (*THT*, “No Ordinary Time”) through intense military offensive and constant imposition of curfews. Besides, the regime’s repressive actions included such tactics as deployment of armed vigilantes to infiltrate peaceful rallies as much as shooting people with “real bullets” (*TKP*, “Protestors’ Funds”) and killing the protestors.

A motive for disruption was manifest in the regime’s behaviour immediately after the dissemination of the TPA. It started with sowing the seed of mistrust among the people against the merits of the TPA itself. The government did so by trying to defame the agreement, as much as a product of foreign interference as of an illegitimate conjugation between terrorists and ‘corrupt’ parties. Another form of disruption was the regime’s constant effort to “wreck peace efforts” of the SPA (*THT*, “Door in the Wall”). The most subversive act in this direction was the attempt to send Maoists back to jungle. The regime did this by not responding to the unilateral ceasefire called by the Maoists, but intensifying military offensive so that the latter would breach the ceasefire and resort to violence throwing cold water to SPA’s peace initiation. Thus, on the plea of fighting Maoist insurgency, the royal government was bent on “destroying peace and inviting violence” through a course of collision with legitimate democratic forces (*TKP*, “Unfortunate Decision”). One dangerous tool used to that end was to incite security forces to enforce more violence. And to that end, the government exaggerated the possible Maoist infiltration to the mass gathering and party-rallies. This was also to exploit the institutional, historical enmity between the security forces and the Maoists.

The remnants of royal coteries are believed to have been trying to raise heads even after the restoration of House. They were “hatching conspiracy against restored democracy,” more in the form of violent antagonism against party leaders and pro-democratic media outlets. Attack on *Kantipur* and eruption of violence in Birgunj are taken as evidences of the erstwhile regime’s efforts at inciting religious fanaticism and communal bias. There was high alert in the pro-democratic camp against the pro-monarchy outfits’ possible ‘play of religion card.’ The imposition of secularism by the post-movement government was in a way the main cause of antagonism by the supporters of a Hindu monarch.

As malevolent as the acts of disruption, the regime is attributed for spreading corruption of various forms. The first in this aspect involves the bureaucracy and the security agencies (*TKP*, “Corrupt System”; “On Collision Course”). The bureaucracy

was mobilized to consolidate the royal roadmap of discounting democratic culture by sidelining political parties. For this, the government inducted persons from anti-democratic camp, who encouraged misappropriation of public properties. The security forces, which propelled the regime more than any political outfit, were the most privileged sector in exploiting a larger share of the country's budget. The national coffer which built on "tax-payers' hard-earned money" dwindled as much in the name of fighting insurgency as in feeding the constantly expanding royal cabinet and the intermittent royal safaris and pilgrimages (*THT*, "Sunset Boulevard," "Here We Go Again"; *TKP*, "Misappropriation").

Similarly, the conferences of pro-establishment bodies such as the Raj Parishad and the upsurge of "Hindu fanatics" (*TKP*, "Misappropriation") within the World Hindu Federation, complemented by frequent royal felicitation rallies around the country, evidenced the redirection of developmental budget towards unproductive sectors. Also, the royal government "embezzled state treasury" quite heavily in the name of suppressing the popular movement, on security deployments, infiltrations and mobilization of vigilantes. In *TKP*'s words, corruption in the royal regime reached the level of "bringing untold misery" ("New Year") to people by "putting the country's economy in shambles" ("Disillusioned"). In this sense, the royal regime had taken the form of an agent of misfortune, and allowing its continuity meant to further "bleed the country white" ("Corrupt System").

Another plotline defining the regime's acts of resistance is the act of gambling. The fact that a large portion of Nepali population fell in the SPA-Maoist side in the post-TPA phase sufficed to dismiss the possibility of the regime's prolonged stronghold in power despite the support from security agencies. Any form of retaliation against the SPA-Maoist front at that time signified a risk of greater confrontation, of playing with fire. This meant fighting a combined force of legitimate democratic parties and insurgent Maoists. At the same time, "hinging on a few diehard royalists" (*TKP*, "Relentless Move"), which is what the regime did at the cost of the mass and against a large political force, signaled its wait for a political disaster. Ignoring the admonition of the international community about postponing the municipal polls was yet another gamble the regime had chosen. The poor show of the polls should have shown a foreboding of larger confrontation in the days ahead. But the regime showed no sign of relenting. With the second-round SPA-Maoist understanding, the regime could be seen to face showdown in "unprecedented

measure” (*THT*, “Gathering Storm”). But the gamble continued in not positively responding to the imminent uprising. The regime rather chose to remain ‘dragged deeply in the wheeling and dealing of dirty politics of power.’

The act of gamble was complemented by constant show of disregard for good advice and possible solutions. It was apparent as much in ignoring the political forebodings before the April uprisings, as in giving “damn to the voice of professionals,” general people and political leaders during the agitations (*TKP*, “King’s Open Door”). The regime’s disregard for peaceful settlement was visible as early as the signing of the TPA as it dismissed collaboration with parties in ending political deadlock and the Maoist insurgency. Also the fact that it remained adamant in its decision for holding municipal polls during adverse circumstances proved its disregard for minimum electoral norms, people’s right to vote and the concerns of international well-wishers. In fact, disregard for any optimistic political measures marked the monarch-led regime’s principal strategy for governance before the movement cracked its very bases.

Defeat of various measures defined the plight of the royal regime. Defeat did not only involve the final assault by the mass uprising, but other factors that signified the regime’s gradual crumbling and ultimate fall. The one year of royal experimentation of direct rule, marked by gradual retraction of Panchayat-type governance through reliance on people with no credibility did more harm to the monarch’s credibility than earn any reputation of a ruler with certain level of statesmanship. The monarch-led government embodied failure of various scales including the absence of peace and security amid intensified Maoist violence. Besides, the regime’s first political defeat had come with the SC’s stay order against the news-ban on FM stations in December 2005. Poor voter turnout in the civic polls marked another major defeat. The scrapping of the RCCC was yet another fiasco.

The regime was at war with the situation of adverse economy and intense poverty as much as with political rebellion, both armed and unarmed. Thus, the state of “downhill economy” in the country did not fail to mark its defeat. And the “deteriorating political and security condition” in the face of Maoist insurgency and political showdowns were more than a fiasco given the king’s claim to retract democracy and peace within three years’ time. Sticking to its roadmap of restoring democracy (which, ironically, the king himself had repressed), which meant elimination of democratic forces and pluralist culture, the regime was fighting a

losing war against its own people (*THT*, “Come with the Wind”; *TKP*, “Curfew State”). The consequence would be a defeat of such scale that the king himself would be in a state of ‘bidding adieu to the country.’

The royal regime is portrayed mostly in the setting of Nepal both as an ideological and physical location. Foremost, the government had picked up, not very successfully, the logic of Nepal being a strategic point in fighting Maoist terrorism in the South Asian context. Such message had been a part of the king’s addresses at home and abroad (*THT*, “Come with the Wind”). The country also features repetitively in the royal government’s discourse on the (in)validity of the SPA-Maoist agreement. This takes the contention that the agreement faced incompatibility with the country having been dictated by foreign powers. This anything-but-made-in-Nepal logic voiced to highlight the insider-outsider dichotomy was intended to buttress the royalist claim of adherence to national sovereignty at any cost thus projecting its oppositions as not really serious on the concerns of nationality.

Contrary to what the government pontificated as its adherence to sovereignty and nationality, there hardly was any ground to believe that the country signified optimism. Nepal was not a fortress of hope. After the resumption of offensives by the Maoists, in January, the country turned to be ‘sucked into the vortex of violence.’ People at home might have adjusted with the atmosphere of uncertainty that had lasted for a decade. But to those in the Nepali diaspora who wished to see a climate for investment, the situation amid Maoist insurgency and the government’s adamancy gave Nepal an appearance of “a failed state” (*TKP*, “Diaspora’s Realization”). When the April protests gained intensity and the government showed no sign of working for peaceful solutions, the country looked to be in “a state of disarray.” When the government responded mass protests with violence, and increased the period of curfews in major cities, the country moved to the condition of being qualified as a “curfew state” (*TKP*, “Curfew State”).

Throughout the six-month period of political upheavals Nepal became a setting of international scrutiny, especially for the fact that monarchy had suppressed a functioning democracy. The monarch-led government faced much of international pressure “to respect the popular will” for multiparty democracy, restoration of peace and progression towards economic prosperity (*THT*, “Better Late than Never”). For a while, Nepal as a country was judged in connection with the monarchy whose credibility was compromised since it had belittled itself by choosing to be embroiled

in dirty politics. Nepal, therefore, is portrayed not only as a setting where monarchy had militarily crushed democratic mechanisms, but also where the seed of autocracy was being planted in the grassroots. The evidence is that the government had aimed to ‘brainwash’ children with Panchayat-type political ideology by imposing a nationalistic curriculum through an ordinance. Due to this and a number of other regressive moves by the king-led establishment, the country had as a whole become a point for imminent “showdowns of unprecedented nature” (*THT*, “Untimely Wrinkle”).

Kathmandu valley as a setting of Nepal’s capital features second in the editorial representation of the regime as an antagonist. The capital was as much a strategic location for the government in saving its status quo as for the SPA in maintaining their fame and for the Maoists in exerting a meaningful presence. The government exercised high-alert mobility against a possible inflow of Maoist combatants in the aftermath of the second SPA-Maoist understanding in March. The fact that the Maoists attacked a number of security stations in the Valley gave the government a plea to resent the SPA’s alignment with the insurgents. The ministers would with all justification alert the security forces against possible Maoist infiltration in the April protests. Besides, the CPN-M’s decision for ceasefire in the Valley in the wake of the SPA protests alarmed regime for considering Kathmandu a major battlefield in its clash against the pro-democratic forces.

During the nineteen-day protests, the capital became the major setting of conflict where the regime used all possible measures to keep its hold. The valley in a sense turned to be a main point of anti-monarchy convergence against the security battalions kept in high alert within the 27 km Ring Road. Places like Kalanki, Gongabu and Chabahil were the most beleaguered points where most violent clashes occurred during the mass protests. And, apart from being a place held hostage to the pressure from protestors, Kathmandu remained afflicted of the shortage of commodities. Interestingly, the nineteen days of transportation halts exposed the capital’s extreme vulnerability in lack of connection with other parts of the country. Kathmandu was one of the regime’s causes for compromise; to save it from greater exposure to risk underlay relenting to pressure.

The palace forms another important setting in the narratives of the regime. In the royal court all the autocratic moves germinated. It became the main anti-democratic battle-front, and remained the principal target of political antagonism. The

palace was one of the three ideological poles before the TPA. It became an even more exposed setting of political confrontation after the TPA ushered the country into a bipolar conflict. The palace is where royalists converged for regimentation. It is where pro-royalists gave and took crisis-time counsels. And it is where foreign diplomats were consulted in the name of seeking political solutions.

Among other significant political settings where the regime got exposed are the Singh Durbar and the streets. Singh Durbar, which symbolized one of the regime's fortresses after the palace, got gradually thwarted by the upsurge of civil servants in lending solidarity to the movement. This is where the Chief Secretary, the government's Vice Chairmen, and the Home Minister witnessed the first jolt of revolt from within. Then, in juxtaposition with the fortress of Singh Durbar are the streets, both of Kathmandu and beyond. Before the April protests, when the government was somehow capable of controlling sporadic political gathering, the street appeared to be a setting of weak political front, while the Singh Durbar maintained a dominant status quo. But the April protests made streets the main places of anti-monarchy convergence. Yet, while Singh Durbar remained housed with the well-to-do, be it the protestors or their suppressors, streets were marked with the presence of the poor and the working class.

A twin setting that embodies the regime in double isolation is 'home and abroad.' The king is shown to have lost credibility both within and outside the country. From both locations the government appeared to become a major stumbling block to peace and democracy. From both the regime was as much scrutinized for its repressive acts as appealed to observe non-violent remedies for solving the ongoing conflict. In the same way, from both spheres the government was perceived insincere and declared to have failed in its roadmap. The evidence is that the municipal elections were dismissed as a 'fiasco' both by the natives and the foreigners. Another symbolic setting that describes the regime in a poorer light was 'brink.' This indicates where the mass movement had pushed the regime and the king himself was responsible for such fate.

A few other locations portray the regime's post-movement political stature. Foremost, the newly restored House functions as a strategic anti-royalist fortress, from where the regime faced major jolt at least twice. The first meeting of the House on April 28 passed a resolution for CA elections. This surely was a declaration that the old establishment with monarchy as its head was under siege and trial for

existence. Another historic meeting of the House (on May 18) passed a number of resolutions to strip the monarchy off all its former privileges including the conversion of Nepal into a secular state. Thus, the House functions as a point of convergence for the major anti-royalist fronts and a source of decisive jolt against the 237 years old institution of monarchy.

Of equal note are Kathmandu, Butwal and Birgunj, where cases of “hooliganism” occurred towards the end of May. For instance, May 24 and 25 saw road blockades and spates of violence in Kathmandu. About the same time a hospital was vandalized and doctors beaten in Butwal by an unidentified group. In yet another case, 17000 copies of *Kantipur* daily were burnt in Birgunj. These incidences lent ground for suspicion against the royalist wing recently defeated by the force of movement and the resolution of the House. It could be a show of frustration against the declaration of secularism that had formally ended the structural grandeur of a Hindu monarch in the changed scenario. The uprisings in these three locations could hint that the royalist hand was trying to “play religion card and evoke people’s sentiments” (*TKP*, “Contain Hooliganism”) in a show of reprisal against the decisions of the SPA-led establishment.

Among the settings that portray the regime in its worst are a few historical contexts. The first of these takes the period in which monarchy exercised a direct rule. This primarily includes the “three and a half years” since October 2002 when king Gyanendra had dismissed the elected PM in the charge of incompetence. This period of “royal experimentation” superseding multiparty system had failed “bringing the country to a boiling point” (*THT*, “The Age of Change”). Next, the period of one year after February 2005 presents Nepal as an epitome of failure, sans any optimism at home and support from majority of international actors. The completion of one year’s direct rule rather sufficed for any sympathizer to “feel sorry for the monarch” that he did not “have a single reason to celebrate this anniversary” (*TKP*, “February One”). However, contrary to the fact that a larger section of Nepali society and majority of foreigners evaluated the royal government as an unsuccessful venture, the government’s own assessment was that of meteoric success in “breaking the backs of terrorism” (*TKP*, “Audacious Remark”). But such claim by the government was “particularly worrying” since its assessment of the situation was nowhere “close to reality” (*THT*, “Same Time Last Year”). Thus, the context of royal hegemony adds to the poor image to which the regime was attributed.



Another backdrop that lends anachronism to the royal domination is the context of twenty-first century. The time itself would rule out the belief in the ‘divine right of kings’ since, in this century, ‘no human being has managed to convince the people that he is a divine figure.’ The anti-monarchy upsurge in the aftermath of the TPA, when the country was moving towards republicanism, had already indicated that there would not even be a place for the king, let alone a respect to his divinity. The time saw a gradual dwindling of the royalist confidence as also evidenced by the poor turnout of voters in the municipal elections held in February 2006. The period of the nineteen days’ forceful mass uprising in April stands for a climax of the questioning of monarchy’s validity in the country, and the end of the uprising brings to end the remaining logic that monarchy was a sustainable force. The people who were unsuccessfully reminded of the king’s divinity ‘brought the king to his knees.’ The royalist call for respecting divinity got lost in the “sea of humanity that swarmed the streets for 19 days on end calling for CA or downright republic” with such effect that the king was compelled to proclaim the reinstatement of the House. He knew seeing the force of time that this was the only “salvaging act for him” (*THT*, “New Dawn”).

The editorials use a number of symbolic cues to describe the royal regime. Selected cues present the regime in different facets. A number of them reveal the regressive posture of the regime. For example, ‘royal putsch’ features very frequently to signify the usurpation of power in February 2005. The metaphor of ‘clutches’ describes the predatory and restrictive nature of the regime. The king is shown to trap political parties by sending ‘king’s call’ for consultation. But the consultations would not deceive the parties into joining his camp. In reality the parties shunned the government’s call for negotiation as a mere lip service and propaganda because they felt ‘bitten more than once’ in the name of talks and negotiation with the king. Unlike what it advocated about restoring democracy by resolving conflict, the royal government was rather prepared for greater predatory and restrictive tools by ‘sharpening the teeth’ of the TADO.

Some other cues remind of the nature of the governance in general. For example, the regime reminds the ‘bad old days of Panchayat,’ the autocratic era. In the same way, ‘eyesore’ reflects the royal government’s attitude towards independent media with Sagarmatha Radio as the main target. Idioms like ‘virus of corruption’ and ‘bleed the country white’ suggest the parasitic nature of the regime. Corruption had caused economic downfall in the king’s rule. The downfall had taken such pace that

potential investors were in a position to withdraw, frightened that the country was in a process to become a failed state.

A few expressions describe the nature of everyday claim that the royalists and pro-royalists used to make on behalf of an active monarch. 'Bringing democracy back on the rails' is the oft-chanted phrase, which best reflects the pseudo-activism of the royalists. In the same way, the royal government was 'parroting day in and day out' about its roadmap of restoring the democracy the king had himself hijacked. Then there is the 'spine of terrorism,' meaning the stronghold of Maoist insurgency, which the cabinet vice chair, Tulsi Giri, claimed to have broken some time before the Maoists succeeded in turning his election program a farce. In the same way, 'peace of the graveyard' delineates the perceived target of the government in its pledge for peace and democracy in the backdrop of heightened militarization against the CPN-M and violent repression of the activities of parliamentary parties (*THT*, "The Razor's Age"). Equally suggestive is 'political acrobatics' explaining the activism of Raj Parishad members in which they attempted to defile multiparty democracy and lambasted political parties and their leaders (*THT*, "Twilight Rhetoric")

Some cues describe the regime as embroiled in heightened agitation. The regime is shown to stand at a 'battleline' in its resistance of political parties, having deputed heavily armed forces against peaceful rallies. The consequence of this resistance, therefore, was the 'fire,' the optimum point of rebellion that kept burning in the country throughout the 19 days. The mass protests were pushing the monarchy to the 'brink,' which was the point of no return in the given scenario since the size of population in the streets was overwhelming. The palace, the only fortress of the regime by the end of the movement, is presented as a weak margin against the mass's formidability. But the king was still in the posture of an 'ostrich' and 'Nero.' These highly suggestive cues describe that the king as the leader of the government appeared to have shown too much of indifference while the retaliation by security forces had caused deaths of more than a dozen and injury of thousands.

A few expressions explain the state of the royal regime in the post-movement scenario. The phrases 'royalist hand' and 'religion card' are used with reference to some of the sporadic violent events following the fall of the royal regime. These suggest the involvement of royalists in triggering anti-government sentiments against the declaration of Nepal as a secular country. Then the phrase 'wings clipping' suggests the state when the royal palace has been stripped off all executive powers by

the sovereign House. Complementary to this is the ‘decisive blow’ which the people’s representatives inflicted on the 237-year old institution of monarchy turning the palace into a civic property.

### **Fearful Protectors**

Security was one of the most talked-about subjects during the Maoist insurgency. The subject got equal attention when the Maoists joined the process of democratic changes after signing the TPA. The concern how the security forces, especially the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA), would behave with the Maoists in the days following the TPA and unilateral ceasefire became pertinent. As the king was relentless with the potential threat of a joint movement, so were the security units. After all, their basic functional liability was with the establishment and they would execute its decisions. But, as permanent institutions, they were not transitory as the royal regime. This character gives them an exclusive persona as an important actor of the political transitions. The persona has its own narrative significance in the editorial discourse representing the April Movement, marked by an oxymoronic identity of fearful protectors.

A larger segment of editorial representation shows the security forces as highly demonized entities. They present a flat character with little or no dynamism in matters of resistance and retaliation against any anti-establishment upsurge, be it peaceful protests or armed insurgency. Their movement-time narrative embodies a simple move from establishment to establishment – from royal regime to the Alliance-led setup. In the early post-TPA months, the security, especially the RNA, stood as the main resistant to possible political upsurge due to the Alliance-Maoist arrangement. This is why they ignored the Maoists’ unilateral ceasefire and continued military operation. The armed and civilian forces backed by the RNA enforced heavy offensive during the April protests to the extent of killing protestors. But there is limited mention of the security forces in the movement’s aftermath, one of which includes the conversion of Royal Nepal Army into Nepal Army by the House proclamation of May 18.

The dramatis persona of the security forces includes both formal and symbolic referents. The institutional names like Royal Nepalese Army (RNA), Armed Police Force (APF), and Nepal (Civil) Police signify the prominence of formal security entities in the movement time. Symbolically, the collective identity of the security

forces involves such referents as ‘those in uniform,’ ‘armed forces,’ ‘king’s forces’ and ‘gun totting elements’ among others. Attributions to the security forces differ according to general and specific categories. The general persona mostly presents villainous attributes. The specific, institutional persona shows largely villainous and limited positive qualities.

Broad attributions of the security forces portray them as ill-trained, eccentric, iniquitous, and convictable with only little potential for redeeming. In terms of training they are considered “neither well-trained nor ... efficient to prevent any untoward incident” (*TKP*, “Finger-Pointing”). Their exposure to formal training and education for enforcing laws and maintaining peace is “inadequate ... fraught with flaws” reminiscent of “Panchayat-introduced methods” which were meant to “cater to the needs of “successive kings” only (*TKP*, “Sheer Madness”), and not really to the need of the society and the people at large. Their eccentricity, seen in their attitude towards the general public, is “anarchic” and indicative of “psychological disorder” and largely attributable to the “exposure to violence vis-à-vis autocratic nature of the government” (*TKP*, “Sheer Madness”). Such attitude and state of mind caused “increasing number of indiscriminate killings of innocent people by individual soldiers and policemen.” Such cases as well suggested the “possibility of mental illness” in the security personnel in need of proper testing and corrective action through timely medical help, formal counseling, and restriction from bearing arms. The situation could be even more alarming if such brutalities were carried out by security personnel having normal faculty (*THT*, “The Wild Bunch”).

The iniquitous character of the security forces are related to tyranny, cold-blooded firing and deploying armed vigilantes. Incidents of killings around the country, excessive use of force, and firing non-combatants and innocent civilians (*THT*, “The Wild Bunch”) amount to tyranny and crimes. These cases as well imply a dangerous trend developing in the security personnel, which ironically projected them as “people’s foes” (*TKP*, “Set Record Straight”). Even more alarming was the trend of infiltration in protest rallies by armed vigilantes. This was done for an excuse to “use firearms against the innocent people” (*TKP*, “Whose Infiltration?”). Overall, the security forces were the objects of general people’s wrath and had stood to become a public “eyesores” (*TKP*, “Mend Ways”). They were convictable; they were liable to be “singled out and punished” by the court (*TKP*, “Stop Brutality”). Yet, it would be injustice to brand everyone in the security units as anti-people. The forces had people

with potentials for redeeming. There were “democratic-minded security personnel ... who would love to join hands with the general public and defy a murderous government’s mad orders.” These “genuine security personnel” could be helpful to create “an environment not of impunity but of punishment for human rights violators” (*TKP*, “New Year”).

The editorials describe the main security institutions – RNA, Nepal Police and APF – in their separate identities. Among them, RNA occupies the largest share of representation. RNA features as the central security force, its officials, its leadership (especially the Chief), and the soldiers. All these separate characters represent a conspicuously negative persona of the Army as a whole. This persona is broadly attributed as irresponsible, discredited, provocative and biased. The irresponsible aspect involved “many criminal acts executed by army personnel around the country.” One such act was the “gruesome killing of 12 civilians” in Nagarkot by Basudev Thapa “a drunken Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) man,” who reportedly killed himself later. This “condemnable act, and an awful tragedy” reflected the irresponsibility of “the RNA as an institution.” How could a soldier come out of the barrack scot-free with a rifle and gun down civilians? The RNA authority who drew their salaries “from the tax money paid by general public” were expected to give convincing explanation to this event (*TKP*, “Gory Massacre”). But the headquarters issued “mere statements of clarifications” calling the incident an aberrant act executed by an individual soldier. The clarification was insufficient to “undo the damage” caused to the public image of the institution as a whole. This and other frequent cases of excess and lack of concern shown by the Army sufficed to lend skepticism whether citizens were really safe under its ‘protection’ (*THT*, “Big Question Mark”).

Apart from involvement in such incidents, RNA was seen insensitive towards broader questions of peace and political settlement. The CPN-M ended the four-month long ceasefire with allegation that the regime and the military took this period to charge and weaken their party. A more unnerving side of this was that the Army allegedly wanted the Maoist insurgency to prolong. This could give enough opportunity to “amass wealth in the name of fighting terrorists” (*TKP*, “Unfortunate Decision”). The Army also refused to cease military operation during the ceasefire. They presented a “hawkish” argument that they were not bound to stop the warfare in the name of ceasefire because they “did not start fighting.” Their refusal was one

sufficient cause to “fuel the conflict” amid attempts of mitigation through national and international pressure on both warring sides (*THT*, “Scent of a Solution”).

The Army was considered discredited in at least two respects. The first concerned sexual depravation in individual soldiers, which was believed to have caused untoward encounters with general public. The massacre of 12 civilians in Nagarkot in December was triggered by the soldier’s ‘lewd comments’ on village women who had gathered to celebrate a local festival. Another case in point was the issue of rape and murder of a woman in Belbari, a place in eastern Nepal, in which a captain of RNA was involved (*TKP*, “Belbari Massacre”). Such incidents could surely damage the credibility of the RNA as an institution though these were the acts of individual members (*THT*, “Big Question Mark”). Moreover, these reflected poor human rights records in the Army. Added to other cases of violations including killing of civilians and suppression of press freedom, the human rights records became a major reason for possible prevention of Nepalese army from participation in UN peacekeeping missions (*THT*, “Closing Openings”; *TKP*, “Camouflaged Repression”).

During the mass protests the Army was reported to act as a provocative agent. This projected the institution in a purely anti-democratic persona fully loyal to the autocratic government that was all set to foil pro-democratic activities. The RNA showed substantive “presence and activism ... in peaceful political rallies” as an alarm that the royal regime would not “hesitate to use guns and bullets against the people” (*TKP*, “Message of Jan 21<sup>st</sup>”). As an evidence, sometime during the April protests an armyman was spotted in a peaceful rally in Kohalpur, Banke, with a “grenade in his pocket.” Such and other infiltrations with “armed vigilantes” could instigate violence in the rallies leading to a deliberate “use of firearms against the innocent people” (*TKP*, “Whose Infiltration?”). Another case in which the RNA allegedly tried to have provok violence involved an aerial attack on Maoist mass gathering in Nawalparasi. This incident right after the reinstatement of the House pointed at the Army’s “unwarranted attempt to drag the rebels into war” (*TKP*, “RNA Raid”). It was questionable in the sense that the incident happened when the new establishment was working hard to seek a political solution to the Maoist conflict.

It was natural for the Army to side the royal regime in its crucial times. But it would look unnatural to be arrogantly biased, to give complete tutelage to autocracy at the cost of the faith of people and their representatives. When the king’s political strategies faced gradual crumbling to SPA’s upsurge, a defeat-time aggression

became manifest in the soldiers as they turned more and more violent against unarmed protestors. The regime was helpless without the RNA. The regime had taken refuge under the armed force “after it lost all moral, ideological and traditional support base” (*TKP*, “Curfew State”). The Army on its part displayed loyalty as if to pay for the age-old tutelage it had got from the royal powers. This lent a simple impression to the general public that the RNA was yet to be an “effective institution” endowed with “professionalism, non-partisanship and citizen-friendly characteristics” (*THT*, “House Made of Dawn”).

Pyar Jung Thapa, Chief of the Army Staff, was an important personality of the time. *TKP* characterizes him as one of the vital members of the “Thapa clan” completed after the induction of Kamal Thapa as the Home Minister. Thapa was one of those Thapas who headed the security institutions (*TKP*, “Relentless Move”). He was reported to have resisted responding positively to the Maoist truce extension in December. His argument was that the truce extension was a part of the terrorists’ strategy to “serve their sinister objective in the name of ceasefire” (*THT*, “Scent of a Solution”). He was naturally against the idea of treating the Maoists’ guerillas at par with the RNA, which was a view in stark refusal to the norms of the TPA.

Following the end of the movement, Thapa was shown to favor a political solution of the Maoist crisis. He reportedly “conceded” that the Maoist insurgency was not a matter of “military solution” (*TKP*, “RNA Raid”). Meanwhile, the RNA top brass claimed to have contributed to the early reinstatement of the House. The army leadership said they had averted a “serious massacre on April 24 by pressurizing the King to give in to the political pressure.” When the Rayamajhi Commission recommended the suspension of the chiefs of security forces, Thapa was exempted. He was reportedly solaced by PM Girija Koirala and even requested to “help strengthen the government” (*TKP*, “Discrimination”). His exemption was virtually against the wish of the general people. Later, the government’s white paper revealed that the Chief was “equally responsible for abusing the state treasury” as the members of the royal families and other royalists (*TKP*, “Misappropriation”). However, the fact that he was retained without interrogation explained a strong presence of the RNA in the country. This could equally mean the PM’s signal to the Maoists that the establishment was in no mood to lower the morale of the national army.

Nepal Police stood next to the RNA as an institution loyal to the royal regime during the phases of pro-democratic movement. At least two villainous qualities were

attributed to this institution. First, it was a brutal force because of the presence of “some unscrupulous police officials” (*TKP*, “Stop Police Brutality”). The force’s brutal character was manifest in their “hawkish” behaviour against the protestors even during the parties’ sporadic showdowns before the major uprising. A more “heartrending and unfortunate” incident was the killing by “three drunken policemen” a school principal in Nepalgunj (*TKP*, “Sheer Madness”). With such acts by individual policemen, Nepal Police was “not winning people’s support and being closer to the society.” The force as a whole appeared intent on proving loyalty to the royal regime which was “determined to go to any length or do any evil act to cling to power” (*TKP*, “Stop Police Brutality”).

Police brutality also took “loathsome” forms during the April protests. For example, in one incident a police inspector “blatantly ordered fire at a group of artists ... reciting poems” in Baneshwar, Kathmandu. In yet another “terrifying” act, Senior Superintendent of Police Madhav Thapa “gouged an eye of a protestor” receiving treatment in a temporary medical station at Gongabu (*TKP*, “Set Record Straight”). Use of brutal force, in fact, characterized Nepal police during the protests. In the movement’s aftermath, the government received pressure to take legal action against the leader of the force. Subsequently the government suspended the chief, Shyam Bhakta Thapa, following the recommendation of the Rayamajhi Commission.

Second, Nepal Police was considered one of the most corrupt institutions. Reports of “corrupt police officials and their juniors” involved in “crimes” were common realities of the time. The crimes by the security providers themselves were a “serious threat to our society,” yet hardly any action was taken against the perpetrators (*TKP*, “Sheer Madness”). The issue of Suresh Dhungana, an Inspector in Nepal Police, presents an evident case. Dhungana was charged with “kidnapping, extortion and robbery” in Kathmandu. He was held responsible for the mayhem of September 1, 2004, when a number of manpower offices, vehicles and publication houses were vandalized and set on fire” in Kathmandu. But he was protected by the Inspector General. The main merit of this “unruly police inspector,” which earned him such a big tutelage, according to *TKP*, was his being “a source of illegitimate earnings for [IGP] Thapa” (“IGP’s Silence”). On the whole, all these instances imply that Nepal Police was in need of “discipline and appropriate lessons on how they ought to police the society” (“Sheer Madness”). The weakness in them could be safely ascribed to the royal government itself.



However, there were certain factors that earned sympathy for the Police. The force in “blue camouflage” had felt itself “most neglected” among the security forces after 1 February 2005, when the king took over absolute power and militarization became the basis of his governance. The force was also the “victim of exploitation” and was equally “preyed by the Maoist insurgents.” The Police, therefore, earned civil society’s sympathy on the ground that they were not “supposed to fight against the insurgents” as much as or more than RNA or APF (*TKP*, “Stop Police Brutality”). But the Police were the most exposed of all the forces and were in greater touch with the general public. This may be why they had “begun to show some sign of cooperation with the demonstrators” towards the end of the April uprising (*TKP*, “Turning Point”).

The editorials make limited mention of the APF, a paramilitary institution formed in order to fight the Maoist insurgency. Characterization of this force as well is not one that would evoke positive attitude. There is a commentary on “two armed police personnel” who “tried to rob people near the capital.” With such and other activities that conflicted with their duty “to fight unlawful activities and defend the country,” the force was a subject to “widespread criticism” (*TKP*, “Mend Ways”). The personnel from the Armed Police, termed “the APF raiders,” raided the house of Madhav Kumar Nepal following his detention in Kakani. They did it in compliance with the order that came from a higher authority above. Such approach of raiding a senior politician’s resident reminds of the Panchayat-time mindset (*THT*, “Daylight Grab”). About the same time, a report from international media mission claimed that the APF, like the RNA, was “increasingly involved in violations of press freedom and freedom of expression” (*TKP*, “Camouflaged Repression”). Apart from these few cases, the editorials do not take note of the force. One reason for this is that the force operated under the Unified Command in RNA’s leadership. In that sense, any credit or discredit on its operation went in the leader’s share.

Several complementary plotlines underlie the collective image of the security forces. A most representative list includes such themes as misdemeanor, violation, atrocity, brutality, instigation and corruption as negative actions. Similarly, themes of redemption and sympathy represent the positive aspects. A closer look at the acts of the security forces through the six-month period uncovers at least six similar yet more explicatory plotlines. Among these, guilt, violation, atrocity and disappearance entail attributes of a villain, whereas transformation represents relatively more neutral and

positive dimensions. The editorials do not appear to have seen any apparently heroic characterization of the security forces.

Guilt is the composite of a number of disagreeable activities of the members of security forces. These included “criminal acts executed by army personnel around the country.” The killing of civilians in Nagarkot by a soldier provided one of the proofs of RNA’s irresponsibility (*TKP*, “Gory Massacre”). The RNA “top brass” was reported to have “shied away from bringing the guilty to book” (*THT*, “Big Question Mark”). From the point of view of general public, it was a case of laxity and reluctance in controlling arms, penalizing the actual culprit – especially the inciting factor – and clarifying the reality in a convincing detail. Besides such untoward incidents, there were cases of “involvement of corrupt police officials and their juniors in crimes” such as looting and extortions. Such cases were ‘a serious threat to our society’ both because the members of the security system partook in social ills and because general people would gradually lose trust of the system itself (*TKP*, “Sheer Madness”). On contextual political grounds, one of the important faults of the security was that they “vehemently backed the puppet regime” (*TKP*, “Show Tolerance”) and “supinely carried out” its orders to violently suppress unarmed protestors (*THT*, “New Frontier”). The security officials who had backed the autocratic royal regime through violence were liable to be punished by the court. Or they were at least expected to resign on moral grounds in the changed scenario.

Violation of different natures complements guilt. Violation of law by Nepal Police was one case in point; some police personnel were found to “undermine the law of the land” or “take laws in their hands and unleash terror” (*TKP*, “Sheer Madness”). Incidents of unlawful killings, extortions and kidnapping were recurrent cases linking the certain security persons. In the same way, “violation of press freedom and freedom of expression,” which was attributed to the government, shifted blames to the security forces as well, simply because they were the followers of the government’s orders (*TKP*, “Camouflaged Repression”). During the April protests “gross violation of human rights by security forces” had “crossed the limit” (*TKP*, “Whose Infiltration?”). Violation then mainly involved victimizing unarmed protestors by baton-charging to the extent of physical disability and even shooting with real bullets. RNA’s aerial attack on the gathering of Maoists at the end of April marks another case of violation (*TKP*, “RNA Raid”). The army was not expected to act vindictively at a time negotiations for mainstreaming the insurgents were

underway. The attack is taken for an ‘unwarranted attempt’ to instigate the rebels to resume violence since the gathering was peaceful.

Atrocity constitutes several deeds. Foremost, it takes the “arbitrary arrests and torture of innocent people” intensified during the Maoist ceasefire instead of responding to it to help develop grounds for political settlement. By then, the security forces had “replaced the tactic of arrest and secret detention with immediate killing of suspects” adding to the surge in death-tolls and decline of disappearances. The security forces reportedly “detained Maoist suspects and killed them as soon as they extracted information from the detainees” (*TKP*, “Work for Peace”). Actions of the security had direct impact in the process of political settlement. For example, the second Maoist ceasefire in 2003 was “jeopardized” by the “killing of 19 unarmed rebels” in Doramba of eastern Nepal. In the same way, the third ceasefire of 2005 had “gone down into the drain” because the RNA launched combing operation in Rolpa, and “killed a senior Maoist leader” (*TKP*, “Unfortunate Decision”). Thus, atrocity had serious political ramifications.

A few other specific incidents suggest extreme forms of atrocity. Two earlier reports highlight the extent. In the first, which happened in 2003 in Choharakolpur, Janakpur, five innocent villagers were “tied to a poll and tortured before they were shot dead. In the second, which took place on 13 February 2004, Reena Rasaili, a young girl from Kavre, was “raped and shot dead” (*TKP*, “Work for Peace”). When the pro-democratic protests were on the rise nationwide following the signing of the TPA, the security forces displayed identical forms of antagonism. In one such case, the police dropped an NC activist of Panauti, Kavre, “from the second floor of a house” (*TKP*, “Stop Police Brutality”). In April, right in the wake of the mass protests, Dayaram Pariyar, an employee of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), was gunned down in Janakpur. The incidents of “firing on non-combatants” became the commonest way of tackling protestors even before the peaceful resurgence of April (*THT*, “The Wild Bunch”). According to *TKP*, the security discriminated “pro-democracy journalists and beat them indiscriminately” during the protests (“Whose Infiltration?”). They “dragged innocent women, minors and elderly out of their houses and beat them” and “did not even spare people as old as seventy years” (“Stop Brutality”).

Disappearance alludes to an alarming aspect of security operation in Nepal. This entails the questioned whereabouts of the people taken under the security control

ever since Maoist insurgency began in 1996. The discourse on the extent of disappearances was naturally more significant during the six-months following the TPA. There were contested reports about the number of the people presumed to have disappeared. The Amnesty International reported over 400 disappeared between August 2003-4. The NHRC recorded over 700 the same year. But reports of new ‘disappearances’ fell since 2004 when the security forces changed the strategy from detention to capturing and killing the suspects of insurgency. The issue of the disappeared drew attention of rights organizations to such visibility that “international and domestic pressure” was exerted on the royal government and security agencies regarding this issue (*TKP*, “Work for Peace”). During the intense clashes of April the “king’s forces” reportedly “fired live bullets” and “dragged some of the protestors away,” and concealed their whereabouts – “whether they are alive or dead” (*TKP*, “People’s Power”).

The theme of transformation presents the security forces in a relatively neutral character. Transformation also complements the aspects of redemption and sympathy. This, however, entails two themes. The first suggests what happened in the form of change. One indication to this aspect refers to the later days of April protests when the security forces appeared to have “lost their commitment and interest in protecting the autocratic regime” (*TKP*, “Curfew State”). Then the renaming of the RNA as Nepal Army through the May 18 House proclamation was an actual act of transformation (*THT*, “House Made of Dawn”). The renaming particularly claims the RNA’s transition from king’s army to people’s army and also suggests a significant move towards the process of systematically integrating the Maoist guerrillas. The idea of transformation also involves what was perceived necessary to transform the security forces in general. One of the needs thus identified was ‘setting up counseling centers to change the attitude of highhanded and derailed security personnel and ‘denying them the opportunity to bear arms’ till they redeemed themselves as good human beings (*THT*, “The Wild Bunch”). Another necessity was to train them adequately to “honor human rights and work for the security of people” (*TKP*, “Human Casualties”). Most important of all, it was the need to instill in the security forces ‘professionalism, non-partisanship and citizen-friendly characteristics.’

Narratives related to the security forces are presented in diverse settings. A number of locations in Kathmandu and its vicinity define their antagonistic character. The Kathmandu-based Bhairav Nath Battalion of the RNA carries notorious records

of tortures and disappearances acted upon during the Maoist insurgency (*TKP*, “Human Casualties”). Among many other locations, Baneshwar, Gongabu, Kalanki and Kirtipur carry stories of security operation in terms of violence and confrontation during the April protests. For example, in Baneshwar a group of artists were attacked by the police while they were reciting poems in solidarity to the ongoing movement. Gongabu is among the most violence-hit locations in Kathmandu. Kalanki stands next to Gongabu in terms of seeing security excesses and has recorded cases of death and disappearance. It is also one of the convergent points for the rallies of different places that created a formidable showdown on April 21. Kirtipur symbolizes an exemplary location where the protestors and the security persons remained fairly non-violent during the later days of the protests.

Many settings outside Kathmandu are also known for security atrocities. The “religious cultural fair” of Nagarkot, where villagers were singing and dancing, was intervened by a soldier “wielding an ‘SLR’ rifle.” Nagarkot, therefore, epitomizes a narrative of unexpected security intervention and brutal killing as well as warrants “strongest condemnation” against the RNA (*THT*, “Big Question Mark”). Places like Janakpur, Kavre, Doramba witnessed incidents of atrocious operations by security forces victimizing innocent people during the insurgency. In the aftermath of the April Movement, Biratnagar saw an unexpected clash “between students and the police.” The clash left a dozen students injured (*TKP*, “Show Tolerance”). In Belbari six civilians were shot dead during protests against the rape of local woman by an RNA captain. In Nawalparasi, RNA raided a peaceful gathering of the Maoists and gave an alarm about its reluctance to discontinue military operation against the rebels.

The setting of Nepal as a whole functions as an important strategic location in relation to the security forces as well. The country is known for some of the worst cases of human rights violations, torture and disappearances with involvement of national security units almost at par with the atrocities of the insurgents. More alarming than this, intensification of conflict in Nepal by any means suggested an opportunity for “interested foreigners to resume supply of lethal arms to the Royal Nepalese Army” (*THT*, “Missing Magic”). Nepal is juxtaposed with a “democratic country” in competence of the security forces, especially the police. In an established democracy the police force “is trained in methods of law enforcement and crime prevention and authorized to maintain peace, safety and order of the community.” It is a worrying question whether Nepal’s security personnel were “really trained to do

what they ought to do ...” (*TKP*, “Sheer Madness”). Besides, corruption by police officers and presence of “conflict-related psychological trauma” ascribed to poor security (*THT*, “The Wild Bunch”) present the worst indicators of Nepal’s disqualification in human rights standards. The fact is that cases of disappearances and killings and other forms of rights violation had led to the possibility of Nepal being debarred from UN peace-keeping missions (*THT*, “Hell-Bent for Heaven”).

A few symbolic cues describe the security forces in a number of ways. The most telling cues are about places that attach a widely talked-about story. Doramba embodies the narrative of the gunning down of nineteen unarmed Maoist rebels by the RNA in 2003. The narrative reminded Nepalis of one of the painful cases of atrocity in the annals of RNA operation against Maoist insurgency, and as a highly unpreventable breach of ceasefire by the Maoists leading to the resumption of violence. The RNA’s Bhairav Nath Battalion in Kathmandu carries stories of some notorious cases of detention, torture and killing. A Maoist suspect’s dispatch to this place then was attached to their disappearance, which mostly signified death. Nagarkot, a place mentioned quite often in the commentaries on the security, represents another touching narrative. The story of the ‘massacre’ of 12 civilians by a drunken soldier spoke of a worst case of negligence and indifference of the RNA’s higher authority. The case would also remind one of the common belief that one could be very insecure from the members of the security forces, especially the RNA.

The historical signifier, ‘Panchayat,’ explains the nature of training given to the army and the police, which equally meant the extent of anachronism in the way the security personnel acted. This is to say, security personnel were still receiving trainings in Panchayat-introduced methods which inculcated loyalty towards the palace much more than the questions of enforcing law (*TKP*, “Sheer Madness”). Likewise, ‘gun’ and ‘gun-totting elements’ speak about the psyche and antics of the security personnel in their relation with commoners. These also depict the pervasiveness of sound, posture, gait, and scariness broadly visualized in the perceived authority of security persons. Then ‘the Thapa clan’ symbolizes an unplanned yet very obvious hegemonic convergence of the aristocratic Thapas in the country’s major security institutions. The clan, which emerged in full structure after the reshuffle of the Council of Ministers in December 2005, comprises Kamal Thapa the Home Minister, Pyar Jung Thapa the Chief of Army Staff, Shyam Bhakta Thapa the IGP of Nepal Police and Shahabir Thapa the IGP of APF. To see in a symbolic

connection, Madhab Thapa, a Senior Superintendent of Police, enlists himself in the hegemonic clan by emerging as one of the most formidable police officers during the equally formidable pro-democratic upsurge of April 2006.

### **Judicial Jolts**

Nepali judiciary forms an important protagonist persona in the movement narratives. Despite being featured in limited mention of the role of the SC and a few law practitioners, the persona obtains prominence as a responsible agent of political change. The narrative of the judiciary involves a few seminal events preceding during and following the movement. The November 2005 stay order against the ban on FM newscasts is a major point of departure in “judicial activism” against the autocratic regime. Then the dissolution of the RCCC in February 2006, which proved a major set-back to the royal government, is another landmark step in correcting a mistake of the executive. The scrapping of the royal commission was followed by exemption to a number of political leaders jailed in the charge of corruption or detained against political activism thereby lending momentum to the mass movement.

The mass protests in April shifted the world’s attention towards the activism of political parties. People who participated in the movement became part of a generic mass. Members of NBA as well got merged into the mass though their involvement as professionals or civil society members was reported time and again. The judiciary had remained the first legitimate institution to initiate the restoration of the House. But the political circumstances took such direction that the same was done through the king’s proclamation overshadowing the judiciary’s potential role. Then in the post-movement phase, political as well as human rights activists demanded legal action against the royal ministers and heads of security forces, once again suggesting the prominence of the judiciary. Meanwhile, in May 2006, the SPA-led government formed a judicial commission in former Chief Justice’s leadership to investigate excesses by the royal regime, again bringing the role of the judiciary to light.

In the entire editorial narrative of the April Movement, the judiciary and its constituents form institutional *dramatis personae*. There is limited mention of individual legal professionals. Among the oft-cited generic referents are “the judiciary,” “the court,” “judiciary of this country,” and “independent judiciary.” Supreme Court, “the apex court of the country,” NBA among others, are specific institutional referents. In the same way, legal practitioners are referred in their

respective professional titles as judges/justices and lawyers/advocates. These all institutional signifiers present the judiciary largely as an independent organization with power of timely jurisdiction and resistance.

However, attributions to the judiciary's persona include both negative and positive characters. The negative characters concern the fact that the judiciary remained largely influenced by the royal government during most of the king's direct rule. The judiciary allegedly made a mistake when it "sided with the government's decision" when the security forces raided Kantipur FM and snatched its transmission equipment. Because the court did not protect Kantipur by issuing a stay order, this encouraged the regime later "to shut down Sagarmatha FM" (*TKP*, "Repression"). The denial to issue an order to the government's media ordinance "had raised eyebrows of the human rights activists and media people including the Nepal Bar Association" (*TKP*, "Landmark Order"). This implies that the judiciary's public image was "not very high" in the early years of the king's direct rule (*THT*, "Stars Are Born").

The most obvious complaint against the country's judiciary in those days was that it showed helplessness in preventing or reversing the derailment of the Constitution after the February 1 takeover. It basically failed to review the petition for the restoration of the House (*THT*, "Righting a Wrong"; "The Forgotten Frontier"). It became a witness to the manhandling of constitutional provisions when the government continued to impose overriding ordinances. Not only this, the government eyed upon the judiciary as a potential force of resistance and tried to bring it in grip by force-appointing judges who supported the February 1 move (*TKP*, "Protect Judiciary"), the types that would not shy from advocating that the Hindu king was above the Constitution (*THT*, "Piano Lesson"; "Clowning Glory"). Above all, to add to the confusion on the stance of the Court, Chief Justice Dilip Kumar Paudel showed an ambiguous loyalty towards his position. For instance, Paudel took part in the conference of the Raj Parishad Standing Committee, then turned a royalist front rather "hostile to the constitutional provisions of multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy." His presence, though as an ex-officio member, "looked somewhat odd" and gave "greater credence to the lack of faith shown by the Nepal Bar Association in his leadership of the nation's judiciary" (*THT*, "Twilight Rhetoric").

Notwithstanding the lack of activism in favor of democracy in the initial phase of autocratic regime, the judiciary kept evoking expectations that it was there to play



its part in retracting the derailed constitutional process; it was after all an “inextricable part of our society” (*TKP*, “Bar at 50”). Moreover, the judiciary could contribute significantly in “breaking the political and constitutional deadlock in the country” (*THT*, “Righting a Wrong”) at a time the existing Constitution was held hostage in the king’s autocracy. In general, Nepalis who understood the significance of the rule of law, and expected the judiciary to play its part, wanted that all court verdicts were “based on the Constitution and the law alone, not on the pressure of the high and mighty.” Political and rights activists knew the judiciary could “lead the process of establishing and protecting the values enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal 1990” (*THT*, *Candid Counsel*).

The judiciary was accorded much of its reputation through the NBA. The Association stood as an organization that could “sometimes be as powerful as the Supreme Court” for its “commitment for maintaining independence of judiciary ... to democracy and rule of law” (*TKP*, “Bar at 50”). The NBA could be the only institution to voice functionality of the existing Constitution until it was replaced with a more radical one, while two political extremes, the royalists and the Maoists, were determined to do away with it – the first, to abolish it for a rule by decree, and the second to dismantle it for a new one – and the moderate front of the democratic political parties was allied to the agenda of the second in the post-TPA times. The NBA was also the “booster to other members of the civil society and the political parties.” Its performance was “intoxicating and exemplary” to those who did not want to be “a slave of an autocrat,” namely the monarchy. The lawyers associated with it were “brave, vocal and unambiguous” (*TKP*, “Intoxicating Bar”).

The court did play its part, and featured in the character of an activist and capable player. At least two actions of the SC constitute the plotlines on the judiciary’s activism as one of the major protagonists in the struggle against autocracy. The first action was the stay order in November against the government’s October 19 notice banning FM newscasts (*THT*, “Stars Are Born”). The order was issued by justices Min Bahadur Rayamajhi and Anoop Raj Sharma in response to a Public Interest Litigation writ filed by advocate Tulsi Ram Niroula. The main result of the order was that the media ordinance the government had imposed in October 2005 was literally emaciated. The order “boosted the confidence of the general public” towards the judiciary. It implies that timely activism of the SC would determine the growth and sustainability of democracy in Nepal in that no “autocratic dictator” like the

monarch would ever dare think of and succeed in “hijacking people’s rights by abusing certain constitutional provisions” (*TKP*, “Landmark Order”).

The stay order respected the National Broadcasting Act 1992 and Article 16 of the Constitution and thus clarified that media ordinance’s “propriety” and the government’s intentions were “suspect.” More importantly, the order overrode the court’s earlier ruling not to issue stay order against the raid on Kantipur FM. Moreover, the order came at such time when ordinances were being issued indiscriminately and “used like Acts for an indefinite time.” Above all, SC had sustained the order by “quashing the government’s appeal to vacate it.” Thus the court’s actual activism lay in not only challenging the government’s autocratic move, but also in sustaining the court decisions with firm resistance. The court, therefore, worked to further compromise the government’s “already weakened public position” (*THT*, “Stars Are Born”).

The second instance of judicial activism involves SC’s verdict to dissolve the RCCC formed immediately after the February 2005 takeover. It was a body formed through a royal decree in the name of investigating and penalizing cases of corruption, especially during the democratic era, and was meant to paralyze the constitutional body, the Commission for Investigation of the Abuse of Authority. So, the immediate message of the verdict was that the Court was in a position to protect the “fundamentals of the country’s constitution.” As much as a judicial undertaking, the verdict was a kind of rescue operation in that the acts of the RCCC amounted to “crime against humanity as they violated individual freedom and unleashed atrocities against innocent people” (*TKP*, “Who’s Responsible?”). Moreover, the dissolution also “reconfirmed sovereignty and state power on the people” (*TKP*, “People’s Power”) and “set a precedent that any action of the monarch [was] subject to a test of constitutionality in the Supreme Court” (*THT*, “Righting a Wrong”; “Loud and Clear”).

The verdict against RCCC had a number of political implications. The major political aspect of it was that the country’s judiciary had faced the executive by setting right a “major constitutional wrong” committed by the latter (*THT*, “Righting a Wrong”). This was a “clear signal” to the king, the Head of the regime, that he “should immediately dissolve the ‘unconstitutional’ government” (*TKP*, “Intoxicating Bar”). In other words, the court’s stance against the government would slowly culminate in the “pressure from within and outside the country” demanding the

“restoration of democracy and removal of the curbs on fundamental rights” (*THT*, “Loud and Clear”). This is to say, the permanent closure the royal commission, which was mainly acting upon weakening political mobility by harassing and detaining party activists, hinted at a more favorable anti-monarchy climate since all political detainees were going to be free automatically. This also evidenced a severe damage of the royal government’s legal basis. Though the regime’s stalwarts like Tulsi Giri were all set to dismiss the verdict as “judicial anarchy,” there was no doubt that it had “sent some tremors through the active-monarchy camp” (*THT*, “Dead Man Walking”).

The SC itself forms the major setting of the narratives of the judiciary. The apex court maintained its strategic position as a location where even “the monarch is subject to a test of constitutionality.” The court, however, was constantly eyed upon by the monarch-led regime as a necessary point to penetrate with its adherents. Both *THT* and *TKP* insist that the pro-palace infiltration of the court by appointing supporters of February takeover would contaminate the judiciary. The court was not the place where the supremacy of a Hindu monarch over the Constitution was advocated; it was where such advocacy would be quashed on purely constitutional grounds. The court as a location for commitment to the rule of law could undoubtedly lend supremacy of monarchy anachronistic.

The court stands opposite to the palace, particularly when polarization surfaced with the November stay order and intensified with the scrapping of RCCC. It is in fact face to face with the “active monarchy camp,” when Tulsi Giri, the cabinet vice chair, branded its activism anarchic. Being a constitutional body, it could hardly take place anywhere in the SPA vs. government polarity. While the legitimate political front was with the mass and the Maoists, and the government busy resisting them, the judiciary momentarily turned into a “forgotten frontier.” It is in this sense a setting overshadowed by the intensity of anti-monarchy aggression in the streets during the culmination of the April protests. Although the SC was the most legitimate location to open hearings on the restoration of the House (*THT*, “The Forgotten Frontier”), the agitating parties chose the landmark task to be done by the palace itself. In this sense, the palace proves itself to be an immediate point of rescue though restoration of the House by proclamation was far less constitutional choice than SC’s verdict.

A number of symbolic cues related to Nepali judiciary concern a bleak stage in judiciary’s performance. The ‘hijacking’ of 1990 constitution by the king, the

government's attempt to 'contaminate' the SC by appointing the supporters of the February 1 takeover, and the frequency and number of ordinances introduced to confront the existing constitutional provisions represent the state of 'helplessness' the court had undergone at the advent of the royal rule. As an institution with sole authority to interpret and protect the Constitution, it was natural for the SC to face charges of incompetence since it could not prevent the Constitution's derailment. When the pro-palace government was intent on ruling by decree and ordinances in the absence of the legislative, and when the Constitution of Nepal was not at all scrapped, the country witnessed a kind of "constitutional deadlock." And the deadlock more or less signified the judiciary's own dilemma, especially between continuing to witness the seizure of its own authority or to come bold enough to challenge the unconstitutional undertakings of the royal regime. This dilemma had ultimately put the nation's judiciary in the state of 'lost glory.'

The November stay order symbolizes the reclamation of judicial glory as well as first ever jolt to the royal government's arrogance. In the sense that the SC 'sealed the fate' of RCCC, the verdict bears certain political implications; political cadres jailed by it got automatic acquittal. As the RCCC entailed "crime against humanity," according to *TKP* ("Who's Responsible?"), its 'disbandment' embodies a victory over organized atrocities. The disbandment further suggests the retention of judiciary's original persona involving independence, supremacy of the Constitution, and the indispensability of the rule of law.

### **Nepalis, Again**

In the backdrop of the transition through the TPA, the movement and the aftermath, Nepalis are shown in at least three facets. First, the post-TPA portrayal depicted the people of Nepal as suppressed, victimized and too weak to raise voice. Then, some time close to the municipal elections in February and beyond, Nepalis assumed the persona of a demanding and uncompromising citizenry. During the protests in April, Nepalis took the face of the mass of protestors – defiant and victorious against an autocratic regime. In the aftermath of the movement, however, the defiant and victorious Nepalis appeared to subside into a neutral, anticipating and forgiving people. Thus, the narrative of the Nepalis can be summed up in a simple plot involving a generic collectivity slowly woken up to courage and defiance to

topple an autocratic system, and later gone into the back seat to wait and see how the fruits of their labor would be managed by a handful of representatives.

In particular, Nepalis as part of the movement assume a number of dramatis personae. One of these is the generic categories such as ‘the people,’ ‘general public’ and ‘the mass.’ The second persona takes such denominators as ‘Nepali citizens,’ ‘the Nepalis,’ ‘the people of Nepal’ and ‘the Nepali people’ thereby fixing their status of citizenry within the Nepali nation. Another persona presents Nepalis in terms of temporality as the ‘twenty-first century citizens’ and ‘today’s Nepalis.’ The fact of being in 21<sup>st</sup> century or today juxtaposes the citizenry with the historical anachronism of active monarchy. Such persona also confirms their image as the protestors during the movement. The Nepalis become metaphors. They are ‘sea of humanities that swarmed the streets,’ ‘rising tide of protestors,’ and ‘those defying curfews and braving bullets.’ They become anybody without fixed political identity but Nepalis such as ‘most Nepalis including those in the political parties’ and ‘youths chiefly belonging to the middle and lower class families.’ Above all, they take the respectable persona of the ‘worthy sons and daughters of Nepal.’ And they are the subjective ‘we’ representing the sentimentality of Nepaliness, sometimes attached with the fate of being losers, and other times with gallantry of victors.

The dramatis persona of Nepalis, which is essentially that of a protagonist, appeared fairly unheroic at the outset. As stated above, their transition was from victims to victors to a resigned public. As victims, Nepalis suffered a feudal system backed by a monarch, which denied them basic needs as simple as a cover against cold wave in Terai. In general, Nepalis lived through a long-drawn social structure marked with “inequality, poverty and illiteracy” as a consequence of unfettered corruption by a handful of feudal fiats (*TKP*, “Corrupt System”). Also, they were unlucky, “reeling under absolute poverty,” being “devoid of a statesman” who would prioritize their well-being (*TKP*, “Poor Show”) during the “deteriorating security and political situation in the country” (*THT*, “No Ordinary Time”). A broader reality was that Nepalis carried a painful memory of their history, that of the denial of democratic aspirations by generations of Shah Rulers including the then king Gyanendra (*TKP*, “Eluding Democracy”, “Int’l Community”).

The Nepali people were critical towards other popular actors of the time. They were not fully happy with the political parties for their failure to ensure good governance in the past. Only the parties’ promise to restore democracy and peace with

tacit support from the CPN-M had evoked some hope that they were redeemed into competence from inaction and stagnation. The people were skeptic about the Maoists as well. The reason was that the Maoists could not be expected to adapt to the multiparty system overnight after a decade's war against the government. The king knew well that people were "not fully convinced of the Maoist commitment to multiparty democracy." Thus, ironically, this awareness gave him enough ground to disbelieve the parties' potential for bringing change through a mass movement (*TKP*, "King's Open Door"), and thus to tighten his hold in the power against the clamor for democracy. People were critical against the regime much earlier than the mass protests of April. They had shunned the February municipal elections showing that they were "aware of the royal regime's tactics to earn legitimacy through forceful elections" (*TKP*, "Poor Show"). Because people had lost faith in the royal regime for its failure to carve a way towards peace and economic prosperity, the parties on their part could cash this loss of faith towards a mass uprising.

The movement-time persona of the Nepali people reveals an image emboldened to tussle with the regime's forces. The people were apparently uncompromising, defiant, resultant and sovereign. They were not in a mood to compromise with a system of constitutional monarchy such as that of 1990 (*THT*, "The Age of Change"). Literally, they shunned "any advocacy on royal supremacy" (*THT*, "Ordinary Mind"). They would not accept if the movement culminated in "anything less than Loktantra" (*TKP*, "King's Open Door") or any accommodation that ignored "popular sovereignty and representative democracy" (*THT*, "Sunset Boulevard"). The people by now were aware that an autocratic system would not seek a logical end to Maoist insurgency and be willing to establish peace and good governance. As a result, they turned defiant to such an extent as to withstand the 'unconstitutional and autocratic regime' which was virtually under RNA's tutelage. Towards the end of the movement, the situation developed to such intensity of rebellion that "no military, political party and foreign power [could] make the people loyal towards the royal regime" (*TKP*, "On the Threshold"). The regime's fall was imminent since Nepali people were against it.

The defiance made people resultant and sovereign. They overwhelmed the government by exerting "unconquerable power ... defying curfews and braving bullets" (*THT*, "New Dawn"), and forced the king to reinstate the House. The change was the result of the "courage, strength and endurance" of the Nepali citizens, of their

“unparalleled love for their freedom, nationality and identity” (*TKP*, “Crucial Support”). People’s defiance was, therefore, the cause of the king’s ‘political disaster.’ With defiance and resultant struggle against the autocratic regime, people became sovereign and free. With the restoration of the parliament, people achieved the right to decide their own fate and that of the monarchy.

Another very important character of Nepalis in general is that they were forgiving people. They forgave the political parties for their past mistakes and came to the streets on their call for a movement. They were in a condition only to wonder the intra- and inter-party hassles on power sharing during the post-movement time. They could only wait and punish the party leaders another time if the latter did not act sensibly. The people were also ready to forgive the Maoists now that the latter were willing to join the political mainstream albeit with conditions like immediate formation of a coalition government. They were ready to forget the Maoists’ ‘bloody past,’ and to welcome them as a political party prepared to abide by multiparty and pluralist culture.

The main plotlines associated with Nepali people take a number of actions in a rough chronological sequence. These include people’s rejection of the regime, defiance and rebellion against the regime and victory over it. Rejection meant not only the dislike for autocracy, but the monarch himself (*TKP*, “Curfew State”). With an urge to do away with the rejected autocratic government, people defied the municipal elections, and later the curfews and security crackdowns. The act of rebellion then involved the demand for a change in the government system, a forward-looking agenda for republic through the election of CA (*THT*, “Ameliorative Approach”; *TKP*, “Int’l Community”). Finally, the actions related to victory meant ‘braving the bullets and baton charges,’ forcing the king to return power to people (*TKP*, “People’s Power”) and winning back “freedoms and sovereign powers” (*THT*, “New Dawn”). In a nutshell, victory more or less involved doing away with the monarchy itself.

The representative settings for the narratives of Nepali people include the country as a whole, apart from a number of other locations. In the setting of the country, Nepalis are portrayed in the state of submission, exploitation and poverty. In a later phase, the setting of Nepal takes the image of a grand location where an unprecedented mass of protestors toppled a monarch-led regime through a bloodless movement. Then the setting of Kathmandu, especially its streets and the 27 km Ring

Road, forms the most important point of convergence. From there the people could make the palace realize being under siege, and to make timely decision to return power to the people's representatives. There are also a number of specific locations like Janakpur, Biratnagar, Pokhara, Chitwan, Nepalgunj marked for huge turnout of people during the movement. Then the House functions as a setting where people's aspirations were respected, and from where the paths for a peaceful Nepal could be carved out by people's representatives.

A number of symbolic cues define the Nepali people in both low and grand identities. The cues that project Nepalis in a low image are 'the century old feudal system,' 'few feudal fiats' and 'the trap of civil war.' The feudal system is known for driving Nepalis into the state of poverty and deprivation. The feudal fiats, mainly identified as the royals and royalists of Nepal, are known for controlling majority of resources and bossing over the majority population. The trap of civil war explains the state of fear and uncertainty amid Maoist insurgency, which also deterred the growth and prosperity of Nepalis. The cues suggesting grandeur are 'worthy sons and daughters' and martyrs. The first refer to both the people who had made the 1990 anti-Panchayat movement resultant, and those who forced king Gyanendra to give up power in April 2006. Apparently, those who were killed in the nineteen-day movement were referred to as the martyrs to accord honor as done to those who sacrificed their lives during the anti-Rana and anti-Panchayat struggles.

### **From Anguish to Agility**

Media feature as one of the character types in the selected editorials. Chapter IV portrayed *TKP* and *THT*'s communicator role in view of their coverage of the main political exigencies. Here I discuss their representation as one of the main actors in the movement itself. This helps understand the role of media in general as an advocate for change, the plotlines associated with this role, the main settings of their presence and activities, and the principal symbolic cues embodying their rhetorical positions.

The narrative of media as one of the agents of April Movement has a relatively smaller space in the editorial representations. And the narrative presents media in general as a less vibrant pro-democratic actor than the political forces. When the TPA was signed in November, media houses were under strict censorship from the government. There was a ban on FM newscast, and in a recent spate of attacks on media houses, the security forces had snatched transmission equipment of Kantipur



FM. Only when the Supreme Court stayed an order against the FM news ban in December 2005, the non-government sector appeared to feel relieved to a certain extent. There was a possibility of gradual anti-government upsurge beyond the political front wherein media could assert their activism.

Widespread complaints on the lack of press freedom continued, yet the regime was not thwarted. The government kept on claiming to have ensured maximum freedom of expression. Yet, it imposed one-door advertising policy in February 2006 thereby curbing private media's revenue sources. The same month, *Balidan*, a movie set in the context of anti-Panchayat movement, was banned to mark the government's intolerance against any anti-establishment representation. Then confronting the government's claim to have allowed press freedom to the maximum, the International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Nepal reported in March that the press freedom situation had not improved in that intimidation and torture of media workers had existed in the district level.

During the April protests, the security forces targeted journalists next to the political cadres. This seemed to come as the government's resentment against the independent media's refusal to write in praise of the February 2005 royal takeover contrary to the admonition of Shrishya Shamsheer Rana, the then information minister. Members of private and independent media organizations were denied curfew passes during the movement in the charge of instigating anti-government sentiments. Apart from reporting the countrywide protests despite limited mobility, media organizations and journalists joined hands in disseminating and contributing to the protestors' funds established in Kathmandu Model Hospital. In the aftermath of the royal proclamation on the restoration of parliament, there began to surface claims of the significant role of media in the movement. But the political developments concerning the peace process became the principal issues of coverage in the two newspapers. Hardly any case involving the journalists or media organization was reported with frequency except one incident in which 17000 copies of *Kantipur* daily were looted and burned in Birgunj.

As one of the dramatis personae of the movement, the media are presented in two identities. The first include generic significations like 'Fourth Estate,' 'the press' and 'media houses' as institutional categories, and 'journalists' and 'media persons' as professional collectivities. In the second are more specific qualifiers such as 'independent journalism' and 'independent media.' These clarified the pro-democratic

media's presence in juxtaposition with the 'state-owned' media and 'Nationalist Journalists' Federation' that functioned in tune with the royal regime's roadmap. Apart from these national/native categories were such actors as 'international media organizations,' 'international media missions' in general, and 'International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Nepal' in particular.

The most obvious attributions by editorials featured media in two broad types: pro-democratic and pro-establishment. The pro-democratic type alluded to media both as endangered and vibrant entities. They were endangered by being targeted and pressurized by the royal regime. As a target the media faced the government's intention of "abolishing independent journalism from the country" (*TKP*, "Camouflaged Repression"). The tactics for abolition were apparent. For example, the government imposed heavy editorial censorship on the broadcast content, such as that of radios. The snatching of uplink equipment from Kantipur FM, and the attempt at closing Radio Sagarmatha exposed the government's tendency to debilitate the private sector (*TKP*, "Repression"). Foremost, the regime's attitude towards the media was best evidenced in the imposition of media ordinance since October 2005, which was meant to "cow journalists down into submission" (*THT*, "After All These Months").

As prime targets as the agents of anti-establishment front, the media in general were portrayed as the "victims of the regime" (*TKP*, "People's Voice"). Besides massive arrests and detention of media workers, the government acted to the extent of denying curfew passes to journalists during the April protests on the plea of curbing instigation of violence. In addition to such apparent "infringement upon media independence" (*THT*, "Singing in the Rain"), the government was making the profession of the journalists "a risky affair" by "riding roughshod over media persons." The then statistics of the FNJ revealed that "111 media persons were rounded up" and "over a hundred scribes sustained injuries while covering the ongoing agitation" (*THT*, "You're No Good").

As much as an endangered actor in the anti-establishment front the independent media were identified as a force under psychological pressure. The bigger share of pressure naturally came from the regime. A common and widely anticipated source of pressure was information minister Rana, who had insistently called the media to "support the February 1 move" ever since his induction in the royal cabinet in December 2005 (*THT*, "Lame Duck Euphony"). With the minister's

warning of severe action, and with the threat of being nagged in the charge of defamation under the new media ordinance, media houses and journalists worked in the state of the “Damocle’s Sword of reprisal hanging overhead.” The pressure was, therefore, manifest in the way they worked under a “heightened sense of self-censorship,” under strict surveillance of security agents (*THT*, “After All These Months”). Besides, there could equally be a pressure of being in Maoists’ target in that they had also “used all sorts of measures to gag the press” (*TKP*, “Camouflaged Repression”).

As a vibrant pro-democratic front, the media in general featured as an inevitable, independent, responsible and critical force. Their inevitability entailed their being the “vehicles of people’s voice” (*TKP*, “People’s Voice”). This was manifest in the fact that the press was believed to have “played a significant role in making the 2006 democracy movement popular and successful” (*TKP*, “Govt and Media”). The media’s character as independent entity involved the established norms on journalistic freedom. This is to adhere to their being “free to publish truth and comment on issues of interest to the public and society, however distasteful such news and views may appear to the powers-that-be” (*THT*, “Noonday Demons”). More particularly, as *THT* argued, media freedom also involved the opportunity “to roam around carrying a curfew pass, deciding freely what is worth reporting and what is not, and picking up angles at their choice” (*THT*, “Singing in the Rain”). In this sense, therefore, the government had no right to dictate the media. “Any effort to muzzle the press with muscle power” was therefore “simply unacceptable” (*THT*, “You’re No Good”).

The character of media as a responsible force naturally corresponded with the situational need. In the first place, it was the responsibility to disseminate truth during the mass movement and its aftermaths. Then it was to help augment the process of conciliation between major political actors in addition to helping in the “restoration of democracy and political settlement of the Maoist insurgency” (*THT*, “The Making of Sense”). And, above all, it was to facilitate the process of change by breaking “the political gridlock” that had reached “a dead end” amid heightened anti-monarchy political upsurge and armed insurgency (*THT*, “You’re No Good”). No doubt, the work towards change equally directed to the same arduous process of establishing democracy, resolving armed conflict and bringing peace and prosperity in the country.

The critical character of media was apparent in their constant opposition to the restriction on the freedom of expression and mobility, such as the condemnation of the denial of curfew passes during the protests. It was manifest in the way they voiced the need to end the lack of trust between responsible political actors, and especially between journalists and the government (*THT*, “You’re No Good”). Besides, they were critical on the armed attacks – both by security personnel and Maoist cadres – on media workers, political cadres, members of professional organizations, human rights activists and civilians.

The pro-establishment media persona appeared in two categories. The first were those from the ‘independent’ fringes that initially backed the regime, but began to turn critical as time passed, especially when the government became more and more repressive through ordinances and restrictions. This group rather became “ashamed of” their earlier support to the regime (*TKP*, “Repression”). In fact, picking up individuals from this group and state-run outlets, the government had formed a “spoon-fed” nationalist journalists’ federation to counter the FNJ. And the second comprises the royalist wing, which had proved too weak to make itself a “true representative of the media” since majority of the private and independent sector converged against the regime (*TKP*, “Camouflaged Repression”). So, in the post-TPA scenario, the pro-establishment side involved only the die-hard royalists of the state-run media. With their help, the government outlets got “exploited blatantly” (*TKP*, “Curfew State”), not only for publicizing the regime’s propagandas but also to “put the opposition in a poor light” (*THT*, “Noonday Demons”). Even worse, the state media were made subversive. The government allegedly used them to “widen the rift between political leaders in power and the independent media (*TKP*, “Govt and Media”).

The plotlines associated with the media depict both positive and negative aspects about them. Naturally, the positive actions feature the pro-democratic media, and the negative are attributed to the pro-establishment. The pro-democratic plotlines concern the functions of media, the issues of freedom and privilege about media in general, and the aspects of boldness and defiance during the movement time. The plotlines related to media’s functions include both general and political roles of media. Among the general is a circumstantial consideration like trying to “prevent more officers from being violent with the unarmed mass gatherings” (*TKP*, “Set Record Straight”). This is defined as media’s duty in tandem with that of human

rights organizations active during the mass uprising. Another general responsibility for the time could be to adhere to truth and to “comment on the issues of interest to the public and the society” (*THT*, “Noonday Demons”, “The Making of Sense”). More broadly, the media then were believed to “uphold freedom, peace and democracy” (*TKP*, “Govt and Media”) as complementary to the democratic process following the mass movement.

The plotlines on political functions take a number of other roles. One of these is that the media “unfolded the ill intents of the government” thereby making people aware of the need of a struggle for democracy (*TKP*, “Camouflaged Repression”). Even more positively, the media worked, and were as well expected to move further, towards “national reconciliation, restoration of democracy and a political settlement of the Maoist insurgency” (*THT*, “The Making of Sense”). Overall, this is to acknowledge that the pro-democratic media supported the mainstreaming of the Maoists and at the same time popularized the mass movement both in its inception and culmination.

The plotlines related to privilege of media rather reveal a condition of tension. This includes the need of freedom as the essence of media profession in one side, and the circumstances during the autocratic monarchy in other. Fundamentally, media freedom meant being able to “roam around carrying a curfew pass, deciding freely what is worth reporting ... picking up angles” at one’s choice (*THT*, “Singing in the Rain”). And this is what the members of pro-democratic media advocated and wanted to practice. In reality, however, there was the condition of restriction on mobility and, even worse, the obligation of “self-censorship” as a result of the “actions of national authorities, security forces and combatant parties” (*TKP*, “Camouflaged Repression”).

Similarly, the plotlines regarding courage feature in roles and actions (both anticipated and performed) of the media. For instance, the role of the independent FM radios during the king’s direct rule was “not [to] shy away from informing their listeners” and to “understand the impact and influence of their voice” (*TKP*, “Landmark Order”). And a general anticipation from all media outlets was to be aware of the need to raise the issues of human rights violations during the protests. Regarding the performance even earlier than the movement, Radio Sagarmatha featured among the most courageous of the outlets by “transmitting news independently, and not compromising with the government’s ill-intended threats”

(*TKP*, “Repression”). Among the anticipated actions, during the protest, was the need to publicize the identity of those who repressed pro-democratic protestors.

Finally, the plotlines related to defiance by the media include the actions of protest and support. The protest, naturally, was against the autocratic rule. It was both in favor of democracy, in tandem with the demands of the political parties, and of media freedom, in particular against the debilitating media ordinance and one-door advertising policy. In other words, media’s alliance with the SPA movement was apparent. The then information minister as well claimed that private media were “staging anti-government protests” and were therefore liable to be penalized or denied privileges like curfew passes. Hence the defiance was justified. In reality, most of the non-government outlets “supported the movement of the seven political parties” (*THT*, “Noonday Demons”).

Plotlines related to the pro-establishment media more or less emphasize the antagonistic character of the regime itself. At least three types of actions describe this aspect. Foremost, the main virtue of the pro-establishment media involved “backing the government to the hilt.” It was somehow natural for the state-owned outlet to show certain level of loyalty to the government. But, it was probably not crucial for them to exhaust energy and intellect to “put the opposition in a poor light” (*THT*, “Noonday Demons”). Even more damaging could be the fact that they were very often used to ‘widen the rift’ between political leaders in power and the independent media.

The fantasy themes related to media are set in two principal settings. Nepal takes the face of a prominent location in terms of the absence of media freedom. Nepal also counts as a location where independent media were a principal eyesore to the autocratic regime. It is juxtaposed with places outside the country, where civilized societies believe that only “uncivilized regime takes pride in gagging the press” (*TKP*, “Repression”). The regime’s main agenda seemed to be to uproot independent sector to make the country devoid of any critic of monarchy. Regarding its prominence as a location of international scrutiny in terms of the status of human rights and press freedom, the setting of Nepal features recurrently in the royalist claim as a country where journalists were given total freedom. The regime’s stalwarts like Tulsi Giri claimed time and again that total press freedom was the king-led government’s main agenda (*THT*, “After All These Months”). This was the promise repeatedly pronounced in the king’s proclamations ever since he took absolute power. However,

Nepal could hardly ever become a setting of total press freedom during the royal rule. The reports of the international media missions insisted that freedom situation had not improved in Nepal since July 2005 even after the regime had lifted the state of emergency (*TKP*, “Camouflaged Repression”).

The other notable settings for media’s presence take the places outside the capital city. There were locations where security personnel raided newspaper offices (*TKP*, “People’s Voice”). In the districts outside the capital, media professionals were continuously tortured and jailed. As an evidence of the extreme form of repression, journalists were beaten during the April protests. The case of thrashing to a *THT* correspondent in Biratnagar draws attention to the fact that the government hated media persons during the movement. So, in a nutshell, the country is portrayed as a setting for heightened restrictions on press freedom to such degree that journalists were held as the regime’s archrivals.

The narrative of the media as a movement persona takes a number of interesting symbolic cues. Foremost, there is the February-first takeover marking the beginning of the dark era against press freedom in Nepal. Its practical fallouts such as the ‘Draconian press ordinance’ and censorship acquire frequency in the discourse involving the royal regime and media freedom. The ordinance stands for censorship, heavy financial penalties, and editorial restrictions. In other words, it embodies the regime’s goal of eliminating independent media from the country (*TKP*, “Repression”). With this, the private sector, especially the independent FM outlets like Radio Sagarmatha become the government’s principal ‘eyesore.’ Another cue that got prominence is ‘gag the press’ signifying the press as very vocal and the government’s restrictions as tools to grip the vocal organs into choking and complete silence.

Gagging came in an interesting juxtaposition with singing ‘paeans.’ As evidenced in the admonition to journalists by minister Rana, praising the monarchy and the royal takeover of February 2005 was what the regime expected from all the media. The independent media that refused to sing praises to the king were bound to be silenced. Singing then was exclusively done by the ‘spoon-fed’ pro-royalist journalists who had congregated under the nationalist journalists’ association. Those who refused were denied mobility during the politically critical and journalistically productive hours of mass uprising. Here, ‘curfew passes’ symbolized a tool for

preventing dynamism on the regime's part. On the part of the independent media, it embodied an opportunity, a privilege to choose the best of the content and angle.

### **Critics and Cronies**

One of the very important themes about the movement is the presence and activism of foreign actors. Their overall presence is not that of clear alignment to any one of the remaining actors. But a survey of the pattern of their relationship during the six months shows them in close strategic proximity with the Alliance and the establishment. Sometimes the relation appears to present the logic of equidistance, and other times that of equivocation. This lack of complete neutrality or alignment could be attributed to the reality that Nepal's power centers were good at maintaining only a utilitarian proximity with foreign actors; they sought help in times of crisis and did not hesitate to call it interference in case the helpers' overtures were more domineering than expected. Foreigners took equally utilitarian and tactical stance with Nepalis; the degree of collegiality or interference largely depended on a motive for benefit. They maintained a relationship of situational alternation between being cronies and critics.

The broad narrative thread on the role of international community in the backdrop of and during the movement presents them in a tactical distance and proximity. At the signing of the TPA, the international community is called upon to help sustain the peace process and to put pressure on the royal government to return power to people's representatives. The international community's pressure on the government mounted when the Maoists extended ceasefire for one month at the Alliance's request. They asked the royal government to reciprocate. Then the pressure shifted to the Maoists when they decided to end the ceasefire in January. When the Maoists intensified anti-government offensives in the eve of municipal polls, the pressure shifted again to the government. The internationals urged the government to postpone the polls in consideration of the safety of the candidates and voters and of the legitimacy of the election itself. They equally asked the Maoists not to harm voters and candidates.

In the wake of the April protests the diplomatic circle was often consulted by the king. This evoked an expectation that changes would occur; the king would abdicate power to the democratic parties. But the consultations would culminate in no apparent transformation in the king's dealing with political parties. During the



protests, the international community, especially UN wings and rights-related organizations, worked as pressure agents against the government's excessive use of force. When the king proposed to return power to a consensus PM, on April 21, the diplomatic circle showed an unprecedented haste in welcoming the proposal and pressurizing the Alliance leaders to accept the offer of premiership. Since the Alliance did not budge, in tenacity to their demand for reinstatement of the parliament, the international community literally went silent. Hardly anything is said by the editorials about their political presence and role in the post-movement phase except a couple of mentions that a credible authority like the UN could be asked to help monitor the process of mainstreaming the CPN-M.

The above is a larger picture of international community's stature in relation to the movement. The international community for the time, however, is the composite of more than one powerful actors – the UN, the EU, the US, India, China and rights-based missions, to name the major ones – divided in terms of diplomatic, geopolitical and humanitarian interests. The actual story of foreign presence, therefore, reflects a discordant picture. This is to say, the *dramatis persona* of the international community is one of fairly discursive combination. Terms like 'the international community,' 'some of Nepal's important friends,' and 'foreign diplomats' are generic referents for a familiar, collective persona of an international actor. A number of phrasal denominators signify a reality of sustained external influence on Nepal. The list can be long, with such suggestive expressions as 'democratic nations important to Nepal,' 'Nepal's major donors,' 'key foreign powers,' 'countries whose opinion weighs heavier in Nepal,' 'most friendly countries important to Nepal in terms of aid or clout,' and 'countries crucially important to Nepal in terms of aid and otherwise.' These qualifying phrases somehow lend weight to the assumption that foreign support was always taken as an "ultimate healer of wound," which, rather than a panacea was "a dangerous trend" (*THT*, "Tulips Can Grow") regarding, at least, the question of political independence.

Broad attributions to the international community reflect their positions as important pressure agents. Their attempt was not unidirectional; it was both pro-democratic and pro-palace. Among others, their pro-democratic stance included their dismissal of the "legitimacy of municipal polls" (*THT*, "Flawed Perspective") and pressure upon the royal government to "protect human rights of the people of Nepal" (*TKP*, "Whose Infiltration?"). In contrast, their pro-palace position was somewhat

regressive, and mainly surfaced when they urged parties to accept the king's April 21 offer for government formation. It was broadly taken as a stance "supportive of the status quo," and in stark denial of Nepali people's right to decide the course of future (*TKP*, "Int'l Community"). In other words, the pro-palace position was "out of sync with the mood and aspirations of the people" (*THT*, "Ameliorative Approach").

Besides, they are shown ambivalent and shallow in their judgments of Nepal, Nepalis and Nepali politics. Ambivalence was apparent in the fact they were divided in their "individual stances on Nepalese democracy and the king" (*TKP*, "Envoys' Message"). Most of the times, there was no clarity whether the foreigners supported constitutional monarchy or a republic. They were not clear what could be the end of a democratic movement – reinstatement of democracy from the clutches of autocracy or the elimination of autocracy along with the system of monarchy. Thus, the international actors were in need to "unify their position ... beyond mere statements of goodwill" (*THT*, "Door in the Wall"). Otherwise they would be understood to back democracy in Nepal "only as long as" it met "their national strategic interests" and that there was no need for Nepalis to "depend too much on them for democracy and peace in Nepal" (*THT*, "Beyond the Sunset"). Their approaches were shallow at times, known for "favoring patchy solutions" (*TKP*, "Envoys' Message") based only on the urgency of time and extent of their own satisfaction and credibility. Their understanding of Nepalis was limited; they did not know the history with which the Nepali people wanted to "break away." Their "most unfortunate failure" was the "inability to see the courage and democratic aspirations of the Nepali people" (*TKP*, "Int'l Community") during the movement.

International presence in Nepal became conspicuous owing to the activism of important foreign powers like the USA, India and China. Equally important was the influence of European community, UN and a few other actors. US presence in Nepal during the transitional six months was one of ambivalence marked by the alternation between indifference and interference. America was explicitly anti-Maoist and suggestively indifferent to the Maoists' positive overtures such as the commitment to multiparty democracy expressed in the TPA and the extension of unilateral ceasefire. The official American position, as voiced by James F. Moriarty, President George W. Bush and US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, Donald Camp, included palace-party reconciliation at the cost of the Maoists. The Americans asked the king and the parties to reconcile and militarily weaken the Maoists till they

became “agreeable to holding talks.” But this line, which echoed the RNA’s, could be no more than a “recipe for a prolonged political instability and conflict” (*THT*, “Come Dance with Me”). The American prescription was, therefore, a “death-knell” for the concern of lives in Nepal (*TKP*, “American Paranoia”).

This equally reveals their pro-establishment position in that the process of weakening the Maoists would sustain military operation and then American military aid to Nepal (*THT*, “Walk the Line”). Thus, America was largely anti-current, unable or unwilling to suggest “any problem-solving approach” (*TKP*, “American Paranoia”). The American position was “unhelpful to a genuine search” for a political solution (*THT*, “Come Dance with Me”). The Americans had failed to acknowledge the demand of time by looking at Nepal’s crisis through the lens of “historical anti-communism” (*THT*, “Walk the Line”). But the US appeared to shift its stance about the political changes in later times. It occasionally put pressure on the king to “reach out to political parties,” which was not actually what the king wanted to do. Even Moriarty clarified his position asking the king to “return power immediately to the people” before it was too late (*TKP*, “Envoys’ Message”).

India presented itself as another ambiguous actor. On the one hand, it was supportive to the democratic movement, and relatively more “serious about helping Nepal solve its conflict” (*TKP*, “Meaningful Visit”). India was also positively involved. Even in April 2006, at least towards the end, Indian diplomats confirmed their approval of the verdict of Nepali people. This was considered crucial in lending credibility to the Alliance’s rejection of the offer of consensus premiership. The visit of Karan Singh, a senior Indian diplomat, during the climax of protests was considered helpful in effecting changes in Nepal. Indian diplomats were said to have “warned the king about possible UN sanctions” if he continued to use the Maoists as a “trump card to scare foreigners” (*TKP*, “Envoys’ Message”). But, on the contrary, India frequently lent ground for skepticism about the genuineness of its interest in Nepal. A larger part of its overtures could be “in exchange for certain economic benefits” (*TKP*, “Meaningful Visit”). The visit of Foreign Secretary Shyam Sharan in December and his meeting with the king are speculated to be associated with this strategy of bargain. In totality, however, India’s stance could be taken more positively. The country was naturally “more concerned about regional stability and peace than creating a global hotspot of crisis” and was working “to diffuse Nepal’s political crisis” (*TKP*, “Crucial Support”).

China's posture towards Nepal is also presented as self-contradictory. In most cases, China remained distanced, and "normally tight-lipped," about the political developments in Nepal. The country assumed a "policy of neutrality" calling Nepal's crisis an internal matter. Its policy would somehow sound didactic to other nations in its message for "foreigners to stay off Nepal's internal affairs" (*TKP*, "Tang's Visit") in the sense they often shifted interests to the level of interference. But China would equally sound ambiguous, especially when its representatives voiced the need of collaboration between constitutional forces. This was what could be understood from Chinese State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan's recommendations for Nepal. Such collaboration virtually meant the traditional alliance between the political parties and the palace, and excluded the Maoists. If it was an official stance of China, it was a "moot point" and "interference of sorts" to take the side of one "at the cost of another" (*THT*, "Lunch with Friends"). Such line was anti-current and in congruence with the US view, which meant prolonging the Maoist conflict in Nepal.

Europe in general appeared more conciliatory. A collective advocacy of Europe involved tripartite negotiation and reconciliation between parties, palace and the Maoists. The stance, therefore, was more realistic. It stood for what was best for immediate peaceful settlement, a "disinterested" international approach which could be "aimed at a political settlement." The European position, which called international community to "compel the king to invite the seven party alliance and the rebels to talk," confronted the American exclude-the-Maoists admonition (*THT*, "Door in the Wall"). This reveals the Europeans to have been anti-establishment. Moreover, they were persistent in asking the king to "hand over people's power to peoples' representatives" (*TKP*, "Audacious Remark"). Their stance dismissed the royalist mission of dismantling democratic system by simultaneously eliminating the parliamentary forces and the insurgent Maoists. Countries like Switzerland even imposed economic embargo to the royal regime in opposition of its autocratic aspirations. Accordingly, the Europeans were pro-democratic and pro-parliamentarians. Such line was reflected in their unconditional endorsement of the TPA which, equally, was in contrast with the American reservation for the parties' coalition with the CPN-M before the latter's complete decommissioning.

The UN showed broad and practical position during the six-month crisis. It was naturally ready to support in all possible aspects of Nepal's crisis to "help the peace process" (*THT*, "Touch of Wisdom"), which meant help to "broker a ceasefire

agreement and facilitate the peace process subsequently” (*TKP*, “Declare Truce”). The organization appeared to behave like a responsible guardian voicing disagreements with ‘bad things’ and approval of the ‘good.’ The UN’s formal line, naturally, was reflected in the concerns shown by General Secretary Kofi Annan, who was practically optimistic about the possibility of reconciliation in Nepal, and equally worried at the rise of human rights violations during the insurgency and mass protests (*THT*, “Fire in the Lake”; *TKP*, “Declare Truce”). UN-based rights organizations showed similar anxiety towards Nepal. In fact, the situation itself demanded UN role in Nepal, which the editorials emphasize as a part of sustainable peace mediation and political settlement in the future.

The characterization of the international community underlies a number of general plotlines such as pressure, cooperation, reconciliation. A more detailed reading of the representation of the international actors reveals seven broad plotlines. Four of these – advocacy, pressure, cooperation, amelioration – represent positive overtures of the international community. Three other plotlines – intervention, prescription and shallowness – suggest the main negative aspects. Advocacy entails the urge for peace, dialogue, human rights, and use of law. Three types of pressure define the international community’s influence. These, as discussed above, are anti-establishment, pro-establishment and broad. Similarly, cooperation entails the readiness for and prospects of support in Nepal’s peace process. Amelioration represents the foreigner’s attempt to mitigate the crisis either by siding one of the power centers and weighing heavier on the others, or by playing a mediator’s part. Broadly, it involves the aspects of reconciliation and neutrality. The negative aspect of intervention implies the audacity to assert decisive presence in Nepal’s internal matters. Prescription complements the same attitude. It denotes the efforts to impose their agendas upon the political parties such as the US warning to the Alliance leaders against their collaboration with the Maoists (*THT*, “Kiss Me Kate”; “Missing Magic”). Finally, the foreigners’ inability to understand Nepal’s crisis evidences their shallowness.

The narrative on the foreigners involves diverse settings. Like in all other representations, Nepal features as a central point. In terms of history and its vicissitudes regarding general people, the country appears beyond foreigners’ full understanding. Since the diplomats did not know much about Nepal’s struggle for complete democracy for generations, they were shallow in their comments and

recommendations during the crises. The fact that most of the diplomats asked the parties to drop their movement to accept the king's offer of premiership reflects their poor understanding of Nepali people's aspirations. The country also is a setting for the prominence of foreign powers in that diplomats often tried to enforce a decisive opinion on the internal matters. Moreover, such prominence was usually strategic and defined by the foreigners' diplomatic interests. Most noteworthy of all, Nepal is a location of meaningful concern for Americans, in particular. The upsurge of radical communism in the form of Maoist insurgency was the major blemish in Nepal in the USA's traditional anti-communist position.

New Delhi is another equally meaningful part of the narrative. It signifies a major source of Indian curiosity towards Nepal's political affairs. New Delhi sent envoys to consult with the rulers and leaders of Nepal. New Delhi looked at the possibilities of Indian influence in Nepal, and that of benefits. Before the movement, the US allied with New Delhi in its agenda of palace-parties alliance. Only later New Delhi endorsed the parties' decision to continue the protests till the king relented to reinstate the House. In the same way, Asia is a setting where Nepal could be placed for its most glorious record of popular movement. The same credit would be accorded to the movement in its being one of the "colossal uprisings of human history" (*TKP*, "Int'l Community").

The discursive aspects of foreign presence in Nepal are represented in a number of symbolic cues. The most common of these are 'foreigners' and 'others' used often by the pro-royalist ministers. 'Foreigners' connotes outsiders who supported the anti-establishment alliance. In the 1990 movement, the Panchayat rulers lampooned the NC and the United Leftist Alliance as 'anti-nationalists riding foreigner's back' meaning their dependence on India's political backing. The royalist ministers reminded of Panchayat-era sentiment against foreign intervention saying that the TPA was "reached at the behest of foreigners" but not on the basis of "patriotism" (*THT*, "The Usual Suspects"). Similarly, the term 'others,' often used by the royalists to mean foreigners, reminded of the royalist politics of othering to hype the spirit of Nepali nationalism. This meant to distance the parties as the accomplices of outsiders and call foreign presence an unwanted interference in national matters.

The clause 'Nepal has never been colonized' reflects a very common sentiment for a glory of not being politically colonized in the past. Positively, this is a claim of long-term physical independence, perhaps only one logical proof to

differentiate Nepal from India. In view of the conspicuous intrusion of outsiders in the internal matter, the idea of being never colonized would equally sound like a pun to Nepal's political dependence on foreign powers. Complementary to this ironical position is the existence of the 'southern neighbor' India. The southern, the usually nosy neighbor, could be judged in contrast with the northern that was largely neutral. The southern neighbor carried the annals of betrayals or backings. It was known for betraying Nepali people by backing the 1960 coup by king Mahendra. Then the neighbor was known for backing the pro-democratic movement in 1990, and taking constant interest in the crises in 2005-6.

The phrase 'historical anti-communism,' a connotation for McCarthyism, resituated the mainstream American political stance in the context of Nepal. The prescription for palace-party reconciliation to exclude and disarm the Maoists could be considered as much a conventional American antagonism against the rise of communism as its emphasis on the hegemony of non-communist, traditional forces including the palace. Likewise, the king's recurrent justification on his takeover as a part of a mission of leading 'a war on terror,' could draw equal scrutiny of the western, especially American, anti-terrorism ideal. The phrase, therefore, signifies an invitation of moral support to anti-Maoist military operation intensified by the royal government. Finally 'a begging bowl' symbolizes Nepal's plight of having to depend on foreign donations. This metaphor of begging became even more relevant in the post-movement period when the Alliance-led government was hard-pressed to find resources to support the process of rehabilitating Maoist insurgents, and when seeking donation appeared to be the most conspicuous yet least desirable option.

### **Inferences**

A broader picture of the April Movement represented in the above narratives shows the absence of an ideal protagonist or a noble leader. This is where the prominence of a set of guiding visions had a value in shaping the movement's success, not the influence of an ideal leadership. In fact, each actor is imbued with an ambiguous identity of being both positive and negative. Only that their heroism or villainy and constructiveness or disruptiveness differ in degree and proportion. The seven parties are the movement initiators, but not broadly idealized leaders to become a sole factor for mass participation. The leaders instead are marked for the notoriety of bad governance in the past and of internal and interparty hassles during the post-

April transitions. The Alliance as a collectivity, however, takes the face of a largely heroic, least equivocal but fully non-disruptive force. It is this non-disruptive and non-threatening posture that distinguishes the Alliance from both the regime and the CPN-M and thereby wins sympathy from a general mass. Broadly, the Alliance epitomizes a commitment for conflict settlement, democratic freedom and inclusive governance, which were true ideals for the time when general people were trapped in the military crossfire between autocracy and insurgency.

The Maoists assume an ambiguous persona during the six-month transition. The CPN-M as a party stands as a political front conscious of the need for peace and pluralistic polity, mostly in its formal guise as a signatory to a couple of peace agreements and a code of conduct. Its cadres and leaders on the contrary often deconstruct that political image acting as antagonists and rebels. They take the establishment for an opponent no matter whether it was the monarchy or the Alliance-led government or the House. This aspect of villainy aside, what gives them the credence of a partner in progress is the commitment for democracy and peace, which were partly held hostage by the king on the plea of ending the Maoist armed insurgency. The security wings more or less function as a foil to the Maoists. They contrast with the Maoists in respect of being loyal to the monarch. They resemble in terms of militancy. Both are fighters. But the security forces fight to protect the establishment; the Maoists fight to establish people's republic. The security forces fight a war of loyalty, while the Maoists of revolution. As part of the establishment, the security forces are permanent institutions. Although a pro-democratic front would find them antagonistic under an autocratic regime, the same front would need their service once it ascended the helm of power. In this sense, the security system would automatically merge into the visions of peace and democracy in facing the broader transition from autocracy to pluralist polity.

Even the judiciary has failed to present itself as a protagonist without a blemish. It does show heroism by challenging the royal government as in issuing stay order against the ban on FM newscast and scrapping RCCC, but this appears to come quite late only after a year of the king's bossing over the Constitution and parliament. A dimmer side of the judiciary during the autocratic regime is its indifference or, say, inability to retract the parliament and the Constitution after the king's takeover in February 2005. The brighter side is its gradual awakening to challenge the autocratic government and boost confidence of the pro-democratic alliance led by the



constitutional forces. Likewise, the media are portrayed in a largely pro-democratic character with some mention of an anti-democratic blotch in some media houses, which had received monetary rewards in support for the February 1 takeover. The corporate sector, however, rises from a state of silence in censorship to boldness in the upsurge of opposition against autocracy. The international community appears divided in their stance for monarchy yet ambiguously unified in the questions of establishing democracy. For the powers like the USA, the parties' alignment with the CPN-M is not so much a case to resent for its liking for monarchy but for its aversion to radical communism. Also, it is not the Maoist agenda for peace which converged with that of the Alliance that mattered, but that the Maoists were accepted in partnership for a pro-democratic movement before being forcefully disarmed lent grounds for American displeasure.

Two main actors portrayed in unambiguous image and in sharp contrast with each other are the royal regime and the Nepali people. The regime is the only complete epitome of villainy with no mention of good virtues. Its defeat by the force of the movement appears logical for its inability to evoke any respect from the general people. There might have been an iota of regard for the institution of monarchy as a national institution, but the monarch-led regime did not evoke any regard from the general public for its disregard for political settlement and overall economic development. Nepali people are the only protagonist force with apparently neutral posture. Their neutrality lies in the pursuit of pro-peace and pro-people agendas, not the human agents who brought them forth. Nor is their dismissal of the government a display of dislike for monarchy, but a show of frustration at the monarch's inability to plan, sustain and implement agendas of overall socio-economic development. People become a formidable character because every other entity that fought autocracy merges in this character. This is why the credit of victory over the autocratic regime is largely bestowed on the general people, more than on any partisan agent like the SPA or the CPN-M.

In the above eight narrative types the TPA, municipal polls, mass protests, House resolution, House proclamation, and the signing of the code feature as the most prominent rhetorical exigencies around which the discourse of April Movement gets prominence. Nepal is the most recorded setting for conflict and political transformation. While subversion and violation represent the major plotlines of villainy, transformation and progression embody the aspect of heroism.

## CHAPTER VI

### Rhetorics of April Movement

*The popular uprising of April 2006 has marked the birth of a new nation  
— a confident and fearless people who not only follow the leaders but also  
demand the leaders to listen to their reasoning and beliefs.*

- Shailendra K. Upadhyaya

#### Actors and Ideals

Each prominent actor living its narratives detailed in foregoing chapter carries one or more rhetorical visions. The editorials present these visions in both stated and implied forms. In this section I first observe the nature of rhetorical visions guiding each of the actors and constituent rhetorical community. Then I examine each set of visions in view of their congruity with explicit sanctioning agents, and their links with recognizable sagas. In the second part of the chapter I organize representative rhetorical visions on April Movement in a three-phase chronological frame of resurgence, revitalization and restructuring with a view to bring forth the movement's historicity.

#### *Democracy at All Costs*

The Alliance is the main protagonist of the April Movement. This protagonist persona signifies the composite of seven parliamentary parties' collective agendas that converged into a number of rhetorical visions. The most stringent and recurrent of the visions is 'mission democracy.' In this sense, the rhetoric of institutionalizing democracy pervades the movement narrative from a protagonist's perspective. The 'mission' factor involves at least five daunting tasks: restoration of democracy, ensuring supremacy of parliament, embracing a culture of pluralism, holding the election of constituent assembly, and ultimately making Nepal a democratic republic. Central to these tasks remains the mission of bringing the Maoists into political mainstream, which is also a vision clearly stated in the TPA.

Likewise, peace forms another important rhetorical vision of the Alliance. Peace was also a most common convergent condition perennially desired by Nepali people during the armed insurgency. It was therefore fundamental to people's growing trust for and expectations from the Alliance leaders despite the evidences of

their deviations and failures before the king took over in 2002. Establishing peace equally involves a number of challenges such as ending the ‘brutal’ regime, resolving the Maoist conflict through a legitimate political process and, above all, restoring the dignity of Nepali people. All these signify an ideal of non-violent and non-military uprising and its culmination. The question of dignity not only touch the issue of royal autocracy or Maoist insurgency, but also the emancipation from the state of ennui and frustration caused by political uncertainty, worsened economy and subsequent decline of national ethos.

**Table 6 Definitions of SCT-FTC Concepts Discussed in Chapter VI**

Concepts	Definitions
Master analogues	Categories of rhetorical visions suggesting three different types of meanings: social, pragmatic and righteous
Rhetorical community	A group of people; characters that share rhetorical visions. Members in a rhetorical community show identical traits, and present similar emotional responses on external triggers.
Rhetorical vision	Composite of shared goals, which the members of a rhetorical community own as a guiding principle; a reason to come together; a cluster of semantically proximate themes involving identical and mutually convergent dramatis persona
Saga	An occasion marking an event in the past which signifies achievements or failures of a rhetorical community
Sanctioning agent	An idea or a person, stated or implied, understood to authorize and endorse certain actions; bases to establish that certain rhetorical visions are valid and sustainable

Two other visions imply a sublime form of the Alliance’s national, political and social ideals. The first concerns ‘belongingness to the nation,’ which would come as the culmination of democratic governance, political stability and economic prosperity after the end of autocratic system. The belongingness would result from the Alliance’s collective commitment to serve the country and the people. The vision equally signifies the Alliance’s readiness to share with Nepali people the piety of Nepaliness. It functions as an important promise of consubstantiation between the common citizens and the frontline political actors represented by the Alliance. Second, complementary to the ideal of belongingness is a more utopian picture of the future embodied in a concept of ‘new dawn’ and ‘new Nepal.’ Similarly, at the core of the notion of newness lies the goal of CA though it was imposed on the Alliance by a practical obligation of aligning with the Maoists. Constituent assembly in any case

would not vanish from the Alliance's agendas since people, without whom the Alliance would carry no meaning and power, foresaw a different Nepal to emanate from a new republican system. And newness tells of a beginning following Nepal's entry into an 'era of good governance and prosperity.'

The rhetoric of novelty is nevertheless confronted by two competitive visions: retaining old order and space for monarchy. These allude to the possible eminence of revivalist elements in the Alliance's constituents, especially the NC and UML. The TPA, the manifesto of parties-Maoist joint movement, was apparently silent about the future of monarchy and the silence sustained till the restored House began to show radical activism in the pressure of Maoist agenda for forthright CA elections. The Maoists hyped the subdued 'retention of space' ideal to garner the popular anti-monarchy sentiment expressed during the mass protests. But this anti-thesis foregrounded the agenda in such a way as to lend it some degree of possibility. But the retention logic has other aspects beyond the monarchy. It is about revival of the 1990 Constitution with scanty modification, which would automatically include the institution of monarchy and might as well dispel the agenda of secularism thereby putting greater pressure on the Maoists to show greater sacrifice to respect popular ethos with respect to non-violence and right to life. Accordingly, the 'space for monarchy' logic is only a minor possibility, suggesting a goal of major reformation with minimum retention of old system, probably in the form of a national institution or a common heritage. But the radical skepticism that NC and UML wanted a reformed monarchy establishes the concept as a confrontational vision to the extent of eliciting constant threat of rebellion from the Maoists.

The Alliance is a formal composite of seven parliamentary parties aligned to form a joint force in their goal to restore democracy in the country. The constituent seven parties, therefore, form the first-order rhetorical community representing the protagonist persona and are attributed to the confrontational ideals. The most visible rhetorical components in the editorial discourse, however, are NC, UML, NC-D and present some form of divergence in their commitment to the goals, especially when then gave the impression of the relapse of their old habits. Four other parties in the Alliance – Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi Faction), United People's Front, Nepal Peasants' and Workers' Party, and United Leftist Front – get a rare mention as regards projecting a separate identity of their own, but can be assumed to have shared the Alliance's goals and visions. Then, Girija Prasad Koirala, Madhab Kumar Nepal

and Sher Bahadur Deuba feature as the most convergent and active characters to shape and augment the Alliance's rhetorical visions. This rhetorical community as well invites an implied membership of Nepali people, media, judiciary, international community, and even the Maoists in the sense that peace and democracy are agreed ideals of all of them. Thus, the protagonist rhetorical community fundamentally embodies a convergence of members with visible potential of divergence. What keeps them intact is the collective vision for peace and democracy.

The Alliance's rhetorical visions are endorsed by a number of contextual and universal sanctioning agents. The most eclectic among the contextual factors is the TPA itself. The TPA guides all of the Alliance's determinant political actions. The agreement promises to "mark the first major step towards the resolution of the 10-year old conflict" (*THT*, "Come with the Wind"). Its promises for inclusive democracy provide general public a reason to join the mass movement to "decide their future" (*TKP*, "Right to Life"; "American Paranoia"). Above all, the agreement plays a crucial role in making the success of the nineteen-day *Jana Andolan*. And, the post-movement SPA-led establishment is fully bound to the norms of the TPA.

The mandate for CA forms another crucial factor to support the rhetorical visions. The mandate underscores the main basis of collaboration between anti-establishment political forces, and is the main goal of such collaboration. It is clearly pronounced in the TPA, the second understanding, House resolution, House proclamation and the 25-point CoC. Before the movement, the CA agenda keeps the SPA-Maoist communication intact, and lens a major mission statement to the leading political forces after the movement. The CA is the largest propellant to the Alliance's unification and its alliance with the CPN-M. Without the mission for CA, the Alliance would probably not come to life and reach the street to be supported by a magnitude of millions, or would fall like a house of cards against the pressure of the regime and pro-royalist diplomats. It would mean the same to the relation of the Alliance and the Maoists. The mandate of CA, therefore, is a symbol of common destiny.

Two more contextual factors have relevance to the Alliance's visions. First, the CPN-M is by every standard a sanctioning agent to the Alliance. The Maoists impose a check and balance in the aspirations and activities of the Alliance partners. They keep the Alliance leaders morally bound to the promise of peace by first declaring and then extending a ceasefire. They also force the Alliance to disorient themselves from pro-palace admonitions after the king's first proclamation (April 21).

They exert pressure on the Alliance to work ahead of the old order detaching themselves from the 1990 Constitution and the institution of monarchy. Ironically, the Alliance's promise of peace underlines absence of violence in the Maoists and CPN-M's prominence in the country's future political mainstream. Second, the *Jana Andolan* (the movement) itself sets priorities for the Alliance. The movement embodies Nepali people's achievements as much as aspirations for a peaceful and prosperous future. The Alliance are wedded to popular aspirations, and would never allow themselves to ignore Nepali people.

Some of the universal guiding factors understood to have sanctioned the Alliance's visions are democracy, sovereignty, people's rights and people's power. These are fundamental to the goals of defeating autocracy, mainstreaming the insurgents, achieving complete democracy and establishing peace. Awareness of peaceful means of rebellion and change, and that of rule of law is an equally important universal factor. The papers give adequate emphasis on the practice of dialogue and understanding as tools of democratic politics, of which the Alliance leaders are reminded time and again. These basic human requirements are taken contributory to the formation of a "fully democratic framework" capable of resolving the 10-year old insurgency (*THT*, "The Bull's Eye"). The more philosophical factors such as "cause of a larger good" (*TKP*, "Relentless Move") and "feeling of belongingness to the nation" (*THT*, "On a New Plane") are expected to guide the decisions and works of the Alliance.

Two of the above sanctioning agents could equally be considered to underscore the main sagas which lent credence to the Alliance's position as a protagonist. The signing of the TPA itself marks the culmination of their genuine initiation for peace. The TPA also signifies their prominence in leading the ensuing movement. Second, the unilateral ceasefire and its extension following the TPA depict the influence of the Alliance in the peace process. The Alliance own the ceasefire and the international community appreciate it as a landmark decision of the Maoists towards materializing their common agenda of fighting autocracy and ending insurgency. Besides, the failure of municipal polls in their peaceful boycott is the Alliance's major achievement. The 'fiasco' of the government's roadmap of electing a legitimate local government, in fact, highlights the significance of pro-democratic exercise in the leadership of a democratic front led by the Alliance.

The second SPA-Maoist understanding of March 2006 is another saga in the narrative of the Alliance's ascent to power. The understanding sets a formal agenda of democratic movement against the regime in which the Alliance persuaded the Maoists of the need of a peaceful uprising. The nineteen-day movement, therefore, is largely attributed to the Alliance's leadership. The movement gets international legitimacy for being peaceful on the side of the organizer, and the opponent, the government, faces criticism for going violent against peaceful protestors. Likewise, the restoration of the House is a historic achievement for the Alliance, and also for the ensuing political changes.

The House is a legitimate location to augment and thus resolve the issues of restructuration and CA which underlies the Alliance's rhetorical visions. The resolution on CA and the proclamation paves a way for resolving political crisis that still had Maoists outside the mainstream. Also, the initiation of talks and signing of the 25-point code of conduct at the end of May count among the Alliance's achievements. Besides, parties in the Alliance, especially NC and UML, are remembered for the success of the 1990 movement and the 1990 Constitution. For these, they are ascribed credential as major democratic forces and change agents. The Alliance by default is a product of the system under the 1990 Constitution; now developments towards CA election ensued from the parliament elected under the same Constitution. In this way, the 1990 popular movement and the Constitution form the most indelible achievements of some of the Alliance partners.

### *Republic at All Costs*

Rhetorical visions ascribed to the Maoists foresee at least three pertinent ideals. Of these, the vision of a democratic republic carries both the spirit of their decade-long armed struggle and the shared goal with parliamentary forces as underlined in the TPA itself. Thus, the vision involves two fundamental programs of action: end of autocratic monarchy and a 'strings free' CA. Both of these, however, underscore the collaboration with parliamentary parties because the Maoists could not be seen achieving and sustaining these without the Alliance. The program of ending monarchy did not endorse violence or armed insurrection in view of their coalition with the parliamentary forces though the cases of armed offensives became common before and during the April uprising. Likewise, the vision of 'strings free' CA purports a situation in which the Alliance leaders would agree to clear the path to

elections with little or no dillydallying. Moreover, it suggests elimination or complete suppression of regressive elements, especially those who wanted to retain the old establishment.

Two complementary visions sustain the Maoists' constructive persona. The first concerns the commitment to resolving the problem of insurgency, which literally means helping to resolve the crises created by themselves in the name of people's war. The vision rather suggests a need of holding a credible ground such as collaboration with democratic parties than pledging to end armed insurrection without meeting its minimum goals. It also underlines maintaining firmness for minimum agenda of CA elections leading to the establishment of republic. Ending insurgency, therefore, only implies less violent and collaborative movement against the monarch-led autocratic system. This equally complements the ideal of political settlement, and qualifies their political potential for conflict resolution. This also undermines their relatively scary past which was characterized by ostracism from ordinary life and violent encounters with the state. Basically, the vision of settlement includes negotiation with other anti-establishment forces like the parliamentary parties, which the Maoists successfully partook in and achieved. Then it is an overture for permanent solution. The TPA is a manifesto for a permanent conflict settlement, and their commitment to it lends the Maoists a political identity despite the state's attempt at vilifying them as terrorists. On a higher plane, the Maoists retain the face of a group ready to sustain the political process they agreed to initiate. Their participation in negotiations and agreements from the TPA and to the 25-point code of conduct do not fail to portray them as serious and constructive towards stabilizing politics in the country.

Apart from the aforesaid constructive visions, the Maoists appear to idealize at least two contentious factors which portray their potential maladjustment in the mainstream politics. The first characterizes an implicit 'subversion is rebellion' motto. Maoists' supposed defiance and rejection of old system manifests in a number of subversive acts such as extortion, forceful donations, military raids, violence at public places and subsequent spread of terror. In this sense, despite their commitment to peaceful movement, they indicate a relapse of disruptive intent. The end of ceasefire in January might have been the result of the government's offensive in place of anticipated reciprocation, but it fails to justify that a signatory to peace agreement could choose a path of violence to achieve peace. Moreover, intensified military



offensive and interference in public life in the name of dismantling the autocratic structure would always signify the intent of making fearful public presence. Such intent was apparent in the pre-movement period. It became stark after the movement, when they declared continuing donation drives on the condition that the Alliance-led government continued to meet their demands unconditionally. The second contentious vision emphasizes the prominence of the Maoist agenda. Before the April Movement, this meant a no-compromise position against the autocratic regime. Afterwards, it turned to a no-compromise bargain with the Alliance-led government in questions of monarchy and CA. In totality, the ‘prominence’ vision idealizes the determination to destroy the old structure and complete a radical communist rebellion by utilizing a mass movement.

Rhetorical visions related to the CPN-M involve an interesting dichotomy of rhetorical communities. The constructive visions include both Maoist and non-Maoist actors. This is to say, ending the autocratic regime, ending insurgency, election of CA, and working for permanent political settlement are also the visions shared by the Alliance as well as the general people. The rhetorical community of these visions, therefore, combines the senior Maoist leaders and the Alliance leaders who were in constant negotiation and agreement in matters of common interests and needs. The international community, especially the European side which voiced a tripartite negotiation between parties, palace and the Maoists and endorsed the Maoists’ promise to own peaceful movement, is a part of this community. Likewise, both *TKP* and *THT* assume membership by sanctioning the Maoists’ coalition with parliamentary parties as an unprecedented political decision.

One interesting aspect of the dichotomy is that the actual Maoist community is portrayed to have idealized the vision of subversion and prominence. Prachanda’s ‘outbursts’ and ‘inflammatory remarks’ are emblematic of the Maoists’ no-compromise posture both before and after the movement. Matrika Yadav, a central-level leader, joins the supremo in setting conditions for talks and coalition with the Alliance-led establishment in the post-movement time. The Maoist militants, cadres and militias and their sister organizations like ANTUF represent the actual rhetorical community that voiced a radical communist intervention in society’s diverse sectors including schools and industries. They form the base of the Maoist rebellion. Their all-time militant presence in the society after the movement signals a possible rupture with their leaders; they are shown not under the control of seniors. The rupture also

suggests existence of a confrontational vision within the community itself, which was against the ideal of an intermediate process of political settlement represented by negotiators and envoys. The rupture is apparent between that Maoist who signed agreements and code of conduct and the one that intermittently warned parties about waging a different kind of rebellion, or forming autonomous republican local bodies to mark their dominance in Nepal.

The sanctioning agents defined for the Maoists concern their main political character as a party connected to the project of movement and change. Their ideological bearing as an insurgent communist wing comprising guerrillas, militias and cadres is not the component of mainstream editorial discourse. Not strict ideological norms but the common principles related to peace, democracy and movement legitimize their involvement in the 2006 changes. Therefore, the TPA itself remains the main guiding factor. It enforces norms on them to avoid using violent means no matter whether they fully complied with such norms. The agreement exposes their potential for working through a unified agenda with parliamentary forces, which partly earned them international recognition. This is why the extension of ceasefire in December is received with acclaim, but its breakdown a month later deplored as unfortunate branding their overall commitment skeptical (*TKP*, “Unfortunate Decision”). Attuned with the TPA is the proposal for CA as a base of convergence between the Alliance and the Maoists. The proposal binds the Maoists to the TPA (*THT*, “Angle of Repose,” 1 Dec. 2005). Besides, Maoists’ conditions for peace process acquire final legitimacy when the first meeting of the reinstated House passed resolutions for CA elections. In other words, the Alliance’s adherence to the plan of CA urged the Maoists to wait, watch and exert pressures on the works of the post-movement government.

Ceasefire is another important sanctioning agent associated with the Maoists. It is at the heart of the SPA-Maoist collaboration. The TPA occurred amid a three-month unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists. Ceasefire followed the TPA and understandably allowed peace process to move forward (*TKP*, “Work for Peace”). Ceasefire in the Kathmandu valley facilitated the Alliance’s peaceful movement. Announcement of ceasefire both by the SPA-government and Maoists carried the process of negotiation and signing of code of conduct possible. Overall, ceasefire exposes the Maoists’ peaceful and progressive character; its absence marks uncertainty and a retardation to the process of their own mainstreaming. For instance,

the post-movement bilateral ceasefire as well culminated in the signing of code of conduct on May 25, another important sanctioning agent, which points to a permanent end of military clashes in Nepal. The code of conduct principally bound the Maoists to plans of the government, its violation created misunderstanding and distrust with the Alliance partners (*THT*, “The Gokarna Code”; *TKP*, “Uninvited Fissure”).

Situational sanctioning agents such as the ones discussed above underline a few universally accepted norms. Democracy and consensus which included Maoist agendas for CA and inclusive democracy signify “a broader democratic peace formula” (*THT*, “Come Dance with Me”). In the same way, peace process is a broad guiding factor which would both resolve insurgency and shape Nepal’s future. This also includes decommissioning of the Maoist weaponry as stated and agreed in the TPA and the 25-point code of conduct. Above all, the Maoists could by no means supersede Nepali people’s aspirations for peace and prosperity. Positive hope for peace provides validity and wide acceptance to the TPA (*TKP*, “Eluding Democracy”). Any slack in fulfilling these would be broadly inconceivable (*THT*, “Work Now, Fight Later”). People’s acceptance was mandatory for validity and establishment of any ideology or roadmap, including that of the Maoists.

Interestingly, there is hardly any event to mark a saga exclusively for the Maoists. They are associated with most of the important events, yet show partial symbolic detachment from these. Even the April Movement, to which the Maoists had lent a crucial support, shifted a larger share of credit to the Alliance on whose call the protests had taken place. Yet, the event is ‘glorious’ and ‘epoch-making’ and the Maoists deserve credits for their contribution to it as much as other parties in the Alliance (*THT*, “Partners in Progress”). The reinstatement of parliament should have been a saga for the Maoists. But, ironically, they were unwilling to own it since the reinstatement was the Alliance’s agenda in the TPA. The signing of the TPA, extension of ceasefire and the 25-point code of conduct could be celebratory occasions for the Maoists as much as for the Alliance since all of these were widely acclaimed as their achievements. But the fact that they resumed violence one month after signing the TPA and carried out subversive acts as soon as they signed the code of conduct give enough grounds to believe that they were reluctant to claim credits for accomplishments in these events. But these events in themselves do not fail to recognize political qualities in the Maoists; these are the markers of the end of enmity and beginning of sustainable peace process.

*Democracy sans Democrats*

The royal regime could not see the culmination of its roadmap. Protests in April forced it to step down midway when it was just through the unsuccessful municipal elections. The regime's actions are, therefore, anti-movement and its rhetorical visions broadly anti-current. With its team of royalist hardliners, the regime participates in two complementary rhetorical visions: democracy without democratic parties, and consolidation of executive monarchy. Institutionalization of democracy was one of the king's main agendas since the February 2005 takeover, which was reiterated in each of the king's addresses within the country and abroad. The municipal polls of February 2006 were a part of his roadmap for democracy. But the irony of this roadmap is that the country's majority democratic front did not participate in it. Detention and house arrests of political leaders accompanied the government's preparation for municipal elections. So, why did the king dramatize the electoral process after having dismantled a parliamentary structure? In fact, the regime hoped to undermine a democratic system by suppressing freedom of expression and mobility; its vision of democracy underlined a dictatorial structure. This literally meant elimination of strong opponents, and protection of a handful of brainwashed political outfits which comprised pro-royalist wings and splinter groups.

Democracy as a vision is therefore auxiliary to the vision for consolidating executive monarchy. Inside the country, it signifies an attempt to deify the monarch. The royalist coterie including stalwarts like Tulsi Giri recurrently contended that a Hindu monarch was above the Constitution. This contention was stretched as far as the court where lawyers defending the validity of RCCC claimed that the judiciary had no right to question the monarch who, according to the 1962 Constitution, had all authority to issue orders and form any commission that he deemed necessary (*THT*, "Clowning Glory"). A pro-monarchy rhetoric in this sense underlines an effort to demonize parliamentary leaders and the Maoists. Together they are branded anti-nationals and terrorists. The parliamentary front is also charged for corruption, underdevelopment and insecurity in the country. The rhetoric of divinity has a two-pronged function: to embellish the king's savior image in juxtaposition with bad governance and insurgency each ascribed to parties and Maoists, respectively; to reassert the glory of Shah dynasty as the promoter of social harmony, peace and prosperity.

The manners in which the regime's constituents participate in its visions aside, its higher ideals imply some degree of optimism. The king's justification for assuming absolute posture includes three pertinent visions: corruption-free governance, national reconciliation, restoration of peace. These would never fail to be assimilated by the general populace since good governance, national harmony and peace were among the most desired fundamentals of Nepali society during the time of insurgency. True that people were also disillusioned by both the parliamentary parties, for their lack of stable and progressive governance, and by the Maoists for creating a mess in the name of people's war. The king's oft-stated ideals for good governance could at least evoke some hope among people. But these ideals fail to make any mark since the regime's actions were not geared towards achieving and sustaining them. The regime's economic activities were mostly extravagant involving non-budgetary, non-developmental expenditures such as in royal felicitations, royal tours, pro-royalist conferences and anti-democratic security operations.

Moreover, the national coffer was handled by 'unelected bunch' of pro-Panchayat royalists whose posture, more than that meant sustaining the king's visions, was marked by stark antagonism with multiparty democratic system and enmity with the parliamentary leaders. Such confrontational attitude towards the past advocates of constitutional monarchy, that too amid a diffusive armed insurgency by a radical communist wing, could neither promote national reconciliation, nor restore peace and democracy in the country. In fact, the regime's actions, its repressive treatment of critics and opponents, and its obsession for military offensive fail its positive visions. The national scenario, which demanded coexistence of principal political actors including the Maoists, proves the regime's isolationist overtures completely anachronistic.

Let us suppose that the king was true to his positive visions. But who were the people to help execute these visions? Of whom did the regime consist – persons with a democratic mindset, or those who wanted to diverge from the existing multi-party structure? The people that converged around the king do not at all signify a forward-looking rhetorical community who would foresee and act towards good governance, reconciliation and peace. The community comprises such individuals as cabinet vice chair Tulsi Giri, Home Minister Kamal Thapa and Foreign Affairs Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey, Information Minister Shrishya Shamsheer, Chief Secretary Lok Man Singh Karki, members of the Raj Parishad and chiefs of security forces. The vice

chair, the chief and the ministers represent a regressive anti-democratic ideal and worked full time rather to foil a pro-democratic upsurge than to establish the ideals of February takeover. For example, while the vice chair instigated military offensive putting both insurgents and democratic activists into a ‘terrorist’ fold, the Home Minister executed this anti-terrorist rhetoric by mobilizing all three security wings. In the same way, the Foreign Affairs minister wanted to bar any international peace mediation in Nepal, while the Information minister kept harassing journalists and independent media outlets.

The Chief Secretary, ranked top in abusing authority as a ‘handpicked loyalist,’ dared to mould the whole of bureaucracy into the autocratic fold. Then, the Raj Parishad was active to downgrade multiparty system and people’s representatives, while the security chiefs committed themselves to suppress any form of anti-establishment uprising. With this group of people at work, hardly any democratic program would appear to make way through the labyrinth of this autocratic network, which was marked both for arid sarcasm against democracy and aggressive discord against the representatives of democracy. In this condition, the advocacy of good governance, peace and reconciliation take no other form than empty bombast. The rhetorical community literally lived up to emulating Panchayat in a new historical setup by working to consolidate a monarch-led regime.

The regime functions in line with a number of sanctioning agents. These can be categorized in four types with respect to what the king advocated, what was established about his authority, what he aimed to do and what he actually did. The king’s advocacy involves dispute settlement through dialogue and peace and multiparty democracy against Maoist violence. Peace features in all of his proclamations, and multiparty democracy remains his most vociferous agenda. But, ironically, military offensive against the Maoists turned one of the most aggressive and repression of political activities the most atrocious during his direct rule. Thus, the talk of multiparty democracy is only a lip service (*TKP*, “Eluding Democracy”). In reality the “unelected lame-duck arrangement” led by him was trying to define democracy and governance to suit its own vices.

Besides, the king repeatedly voiced legitimacy of his ascent and hold on power with the agenda of suppressing terrorism, maintaining security, protecting the country’s sovereignty and existence, and abolishing corruption. Terrorism is, therefore, a failed rhetorical pretext to draw the attention of international community

(*THT*, “Come with the Wind”). In the same way, security is a plea to redirect “health and development budget” to the benefit of the military and its heads (*TKP*, “Cold Wave”). The talk of sovereignty and existence is a tactic to veil the denial of civil rights (*THT*, “Love Me Tender”). Similarly, the charge of corruption was heaped upon the dissenters in the democratic front. But corruption is a sheer tool to harass politicians, while the ministers kept embezzling the state treasury in the name of felicitating the royals and fighting the terrorists (*TKP*, “Corrupt System”; “February One”).

Two factors appear to legitimize the king’s authority. The first is the takeover of February 2005 and underlying roadmap for ‘peace and democracy.’ The takeover is taken to warrant the activities of the king, his ministers and the royalist activists in the Raj Parishad, World Hindu Federation and some small parties. The municipal election is a part of the royal roadmap for reviving elected local bodies, as pronounced in the proclamation of February 2006. The second factor that was imposed in establishing royal authority is ‘military might’ constituting RNA, APF and Nepal Police. In fact, the royal regime is considered to have taken refuge under the armed forces; which is to say, it would remain devoid of visibility and power without the backing from security wings.

The regime is seen to have at least three aims. The first is to impose a martial law in the country. It was the “last resort available for an insecure, weak and undemocratic regime” (*TKP*, “Sheer Despotism”). The second is to keep changing the people in the cabinet involving more stringent advocates of the autocratic rule. The December 2005 reshuffle of cabinet in which diehard royalists like Kamal Thapa and Shrishya Shamsher were inducted is a case in point. The king would use this tactic to lure the agitating parties. He did so with the offer of premiership in his April 21 proclamation. In reality, formation of another government or cabinet reshuffle or offer of premiership was a popular royal tool to mislead the political parties in a bid to strengthen the hold of the royalist front (*THT*, “Angle of Repose”, 18 Apr. 2006). Thirdly, through the royalists, he wanted to establish himself as a divinity. The logic of the king being a divine figure and above the Constitution is brought to fore quite often in order to institute the presence, power and indispensability of the monarchy in Nepal. The logic’s legitimacy is questioned with respect to the context, the 21<sup>st</sup> century consciousness of people, where to argue for the divinity of Hindu monarch was tantamount to following the ‘rule of the jungle.’

But what the regime practically imposed confronts what the king advocated. In other words, the regime's actual sanctioning agents are of harsher nature. The first in this category are curfew and violence. Curfews were everyday realities during the April protests. Violence was the reality of the streets. Violence was accorded to the government's feeling of vendetta towards pro-democratic activists. Thus, the government's presence is synonymous to "harsher laws and arbitrary behaviour" (*THT*, "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof"). The security forces' collective aggression towards the protestors shows as if every single individual then was a Maoist infiltrator, a terrorist, an enemy to an ideal ruler. The amendment and imposition of the TADO in the eve of the SPA-led protests early April evidences that the government's preparation for the impending protest was one of extreme alert and readiness for deadly retaliation. Any dissenter of the regime then could be trapped and punished in the charge of anti-social activity or for being an accomplice of the terrorist outfit (*THT*, "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof"; *TKP*, "A Meaner TADO"). Thus, the actual sanctioning agents that guided the regime's everyday activities virtually corroborate its antagonist personae though what it advocated is in little or no conflict with the ideals of other actors.

The editorials mention some occasions that mark the main sagas related with the narratives of the royal regime. The first day of February 2005 very often features as the moment of landmark success in the annals of king's anti-democratic ventures. It signifies both the revival of active monarchy and the gradual dismantling of the 1990 Constitution, the principal foe to active monarchy. February 1 remains as important for the royalist camp as is the TPA for the anti-royalist. The regime aims to retain its hold with tenacity to the fundamentals of the February royal proclamation, whereas the SPA-Maoist front pledges their commitment to the TPA. The king celebrates the anniversary of his direct role on 1 February 2006, with another complementary proclamation. This evidences the prominence of the occasion.

The municipal elections of 8 February 2006 were designed to mark a first-phase success in the king's roadmap of election series. Complete success of the elections would legitimize the king's hold on power thereby putting the parties' fight for democracy in a poorer light. This would lend the regime international credibility. So, even though the election is termed a complete farce, for a voter turnout of only 20 percent as per Election Commission's claim and of 5 percent according to the opposing parties, the government claims to have held it successfully and in "free and



fair manner” (*THT*, “On the Murky Pond”). Similarly, the regime observes Democracy Day with perceptible pretext of adhering to democracy to the letter. It obviously sounds like an irony for a destroyer of democracy to sing its paeans. Then the king also observes Nepali New Year on 14 April, in which he reiterates his commitment to peace and democracy. This comes at the peak of the movement, yet he avoids mentioning the political parties and the ongoing protests.

### *Fighting for Monarchy*

Unlike the SPA, the Maoists or the regime, the security forces were afield not with an agenda of their own. Their actions were defined by their institutional characters, so were their visions. While RNA as a national army was meant largely to protect the country’s sovereignty, APF as a paramilitary wing would fight insurgency such as the Maoist conflict. Nepal Police then worked to maintain law and order and to protect civilians from crime. These aspects are repeatedly mentioned in the editorials as reminders that each of the forces was expected to act in the manners it was institutionally supposed to – as a friend but not a foe to the people.

In a broader sense, the security forces are associated with the all-time ideals of maintaining peace and protecting Nepali citizens. These were even more relevant at a time when armed insurgency was at its peak, or had just picked up formidability at the breach of ceasefire. But, the separate actions of the forces do not idealize these visions since there were stringent complaints about human rights violations and unlawful detentions and killings by the security forces. These actions dismiss the ideals of protections and lend the forces a nearly oxymoronic character of ‘fearful protectors.’

The actual vision of security forces inferred from the editorials show their inclination to protect the regime at all costs. This literally means protection of monarchy. The April Movement saw a collective retaliation of protests by the civic police and APF with strong backing from the national army. In a sense, the forces had come out with an alert for tackling a huge offensive that would mainly come from armed Maoists suspected to have infiltrated in protest rallies. The fear of infiltration might have given an impression that every aggressive protest was the making of the Maoists and was a direct threat to monarchy. Also, the Alliance-led April protest which was supposed to restore democracy took the shape of a force ready to uproot monarchy. Security mobilization during those days, which was marked by extreme violence against peaceful rallies, grasped the ideal of protecting the monarchy at all

costs. In this connection, *TKP*'s comment that the regime was under RNA's tutelage during the protests holds much sense.

Security visions have both explicit and implied rhetorical community. Explicitly, these are integral to the regime community which involved the king and his Council of Ministers. In particular, the 'Thapa clan' that headed the security institutions is shown to have participated in the anti-democratic ideal of protecting the regime though in another level it embodies the determination to foil potential armed insurrection. This is the aspect the editorials underestimated – the possibility of chaos that the Maoists' presence could cause during the protests. Implicitly, the rhetorical community involves those who did not want the monarchy to be replaced by a radical communist party. The US, with its anti-Maoist position and repeated advocacy of palace-party reconciliation at the cost of Maoists, best idealizes the vision of protecting the old order along with the monarchy.

The security forces appear to operate under limited sanctioning agents. On a positive note, they are authorized for 'law enforcement and crime prevention,' no matter how effectively, in the backdrop of a long-drawn armed insurgency. Such authority is formal and is sanctioned by the establishment. In this sense, any development such as a peace agreement or a unilateral ceasefire beyond the purview of the government would not matter much to the security forces. But the regime's loud emphasis on providing security and protecting basic human rights turned ironical in a militarized approach to deal with pro-democratic aspirations beyond the TPA. The idea of protection was widely perceived and advocated but poorly followed. A daunting question had prevailed in the backdrop of the ongoing peace process: whether common people were safe from security forces themselves (*THT*, "Big Question Mark"). This concern bears validity during such times when "civil liberties and press freedom" face heavy restriction from the royal regime whose widely hyped goal is to bring democracy on track (*THT*, "Closing Openings").

At least one event could mark a saga in the narrative involving security forces. The royal takeover of 1 February 2005 tended to establish the country's security wings as the principal vehicles and apparatuses of the state. The security wings experienced a kind of resurrection being under the palace, and had an opportunity to test their loyalty to the erstwhile royalist power center. Apart from this, not a single historical event during the six-month period can be considered to mark a saga for the security forces. A few events are worth a mention regarding how the security

institutions in general were exposed in the ensuing political climate. The “parties-Maoist accord,” the TPA, is remarkable in that it stipulated RNA being put under UN supervision in the same way as the Maoist army during the CA elections (*THT*, “Scent of a Solution”). Then the “historic mass movement” is important to mark the defeat of the regime and the supporters of the regime such as the office-bearers of security agencies. The chiefs of Nepal Police and APF lost their position as a result of the change in government. Their loss is considered the victory of the general mass acted upon “in deference to the feeling expressed” in the popular movement (*THT*, “New Frontier”). Then the House proclamation of May marks a seminal change in RNA’s position. A few other modifications were brought forth in addition to renaming the institution. Two of which include the provision to appoint the CoAS by the Council of Ministers, and revocation of the arrangement of Supreme Commander of the Army.

### *Fighting for the Rule of Law*

The works of judiciary can be evaluated in two respects. In the first place, the judiciary is a formal institution with clearly stated procedures, scopes and limitations. In the second, it is a community of professionals with expertise and competence to interpret the country’s constitution. The institutional visions then are taken for granted, and mostly expected to be achieved by the SC. In case of the six-month period, this meant the anticipation for the Court’s competence in ‘breaking political and constitutional deadlock’ in the country. This involved rescuing the Constitution, which was held hostage, superseded by ordinances, and interpreted at will and convenience of the royal regime. Moreover, the court was expected to work towards revival of the legislative body, the House of Representatives, which was made defunct by the royal takeover. Restoration by the court could be a more legitimate solution than by a royal decree following the pressure of movement. The court’s contribution in this line would be to ‘control the further downward spiral of the country’ in the sense of retracting rule by Constitution over the rule by ordinances. However, the court is seen incapable of performing this vision. Initially, right after the February takeover, it had remained indifferent towards the need of restoring the House. After the TPA, restoration by a forceful movement sidelined the constitutional option, and the court became a ‘forgotten frontier.’

Yet, the judiciary executes the rhetorical vision of ‘fighting’ for ‘rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy.’ Needless to say, the stay order against the ban on

FM radio newscast justifies its commitment for freedom of expression. It was a fight because it thwarted an ordinance that sought to cripple the country's independent media by violating the Article 13 of the Constitution. In the same line, the annulment of RCCC signifies the judiciary's logical confrontation with an unconstitutional institution. The annulment implicitly lent solidarity to the pro-democratic movement in that the regime lost a plea to harass political leaders in the charge of corruption and abuse of authority. Similarly, the Court's verdict to scrap the royal commission could be safely ascribed to the lawyers and judges who shared the democratic ideals of the NBA and constantly questioned the validity of the commission.

The judiciary is a rhetorical community in itself. Naturally, ideals of safeguarding constitutional rights are owned by the SC, NBA, justices and advocates. During the autocratic rule, lawyers' bravery in challenging the king's unconstitutional moves, and NBA's "unflinching commitment to democracy and rule of law" define the credibility of the judiciary as a whole (*TKP*, "Intoxicating Bar"). In the case of the stay order, the community includes advocate Tulsi Ram Niraula, who filed the Public Interest Litigation writ against the ban on FMs, and the two-member bench of justices Min Bahadur Rayamajhi and Anoop Raj Sharma, who issued the order. Likewise, a five-member bench partakes in the vision of safeguarding the Constitution in the case of the RCCC dissolution with declaration that the king had no authority to form a commission (*THT*, "Righting a Wrong"). However, the Chief Justice of SC appears to be out of the community. His association with the Raj Parishad and occasional tussle with the NBA for his disregard for the demands of retracting the Constitution often depict him distanced from the community that was fairly opposed to the royal regime. But visions of judiciary are owned by the independent media and the democratic front. Independent radios are immediate beneficiaries of the stay order, and the democratic front that of the RCCC dissolution. Thus, they are auxiliary to the judiciary's rhetorical community.

A few sanctioning agents sustain the judicial visions including mainly the Constitution of Nepal 1990. At a time the Constitution had become subject to relegation or replacement in the main political front characterized by a tri-polar conflict, the SC emerges as an institution that could keep the spirit of the Constitution intact. The November stay order and the dissolution RCCC evidence the court's strict adherence to the fundamentals of human rights and rights to information. In addition, the NBA and its committed members epitomize the respect for democracy and the

rule of law. Their participation lends credence to the pro-democratic movement though the immediate goal of NBA in general might not have been to push for downright republic.

At least three events in the six-month phase feature as the sagas with respect to the judiciary. The stay order against the press ordinance and the dissolution of the RCCC are the most important historical achievements contributing to the judiciary's protagonist persona. The restoration of the House formed another important saga for the judiciary though, practically, the royal proclamation overlooked the legitimate role of the SC to do the same through a constitutional process. The royal proclamation retracted parliamentary system and freed all constitutional bodies including the court from the clutches of autocracy though the culture of resolving political deadlocks through consensus gradually ignored the potential of the judiciary. In this sense, the April 24 change more or less found the judiciary standing face to face with a formidable political majority.

#### *Nepalis for Peace and Republic*

Rhetorical visions related to peace and republic characterize Nepalese people's participation in the April Movement. Their participation in the protests implies a hope for a peaceful future, not necessarily their sympathy for the political parties, neither their readiness to adjust with the Maoists. The TPA epitomized this hope, aside from stating commitments of the Alliance and the Maoists to revisit their past follies. People risked their lives by joining the Alliance's protest; they knew that protests would be bloody in the government's shoot-at-sight response to the Maoist bogey and subsequent imposition of curfews. The vision for peace to which the Maoists had lent commitment earned people's forgiveness to them. The vision of republic in this sense surpasses the Alliance's primary goal of restoring the parliament, which did not necessarily visualize a position for monarchy but presupposed the abdication of power by the monarch.

Outscoring the target for parliament and voicing the demand for republic the people were least concerned about how the political parties regarded the value of monarchy as a national institution. By adherence to republic, Nepali people were not giving the Maoists a benefit of prominence for one of their agendas. In fact, the vision of republic is the ideal of a larger rhetorical community beyond the Maoists. The community primarily comprises the 'sea of humanities,' which is largely unidentified

but could be said to include people from sectors as diverse as civil society, professional groups, independent media, marginalized communities and, above all, population of young Nepalis.

The main sanctioning agents to define people's visions are people themselves. A movement of the scale like that of April 2006 can hardly happen without the endorsement and participation of the mass. But one could see both contextual and universal factors guiding the people's participation. Among the contextual factors are the norms that Nepali people's verdicts were final, and that the Constitution of Nepal protected the rights of Nepalis. Nepalis' rebellion against autocracy respected the norms of constitutional assurance for the right to live without fear and pressure. The universal sanctioning agents involve such factors as freedom, nationality, identity, sovereignty and representative democracy. These provided logic for convergence between the Nepali people and the political parties, and for their sympathy to the Maoists. The TPA clearly spelled out these factors, and achieved a basis for people's readiness to defy the autocratic regime.

The editorials link the narratives of Nepali people with three major sagas which include three historical events. The first is the success of the 1990 movement. This was when Nepalis had undergone a fair test of their power against a monarch-led autocratic Panchayat system. The second is *Jana Andolan II* itself, the popular uprising of 2006, when people ended a monarch-led government without a fair chance for the monarch to claim a share of power. The third saga is the restoration of the House by the force of people's movement. The restoration marks the beginning of a process towards mainstreaming the insurgent Maoists, and the establishment of republican system through elections to constituent assembly.

### *Media for Freedom and Truth*

The papers perceive freedom and truth as the principal rhetorical visions of media in general. They participate in this vision in two levels. First, they advocate freedom of expression and pledge to publish truth in defiance of the autocratic regime. They express commitment to raise people's voice amid all odd circumstances. Such commitment demanded accountability to maintain consistency in opposing the undemocratic regime before the movement. During the movement it was to help minimize violence as well as boost the spirit of protestors to sustain in the movement. After the movement it was to publish a note of alarm that the leaders in the helm of

power did not betray people's aspiration either by their reluctance to make necessary move due to their obsession with the old system, or by getting carried away with Maoists' atrocious demands and conditions to the extent of creating a political chaos.

In the second level, the papers uphold the vision of restoring democracy in Nepal. This actually entailed the involvement of media persons and independent institutions in the movement against autocracy. It meant the right to hold passes and move freely during the curfew hours. The freedom to move about during conflict hours also underlined the choice of right subject and right perspective. Likewise, the vision of democracy implies for media's power to sustain the ideal of freedom for themselves and for general people. In 2006, this was to withstand an autocratic regime's 'muscle power' that targeted pro-democratic journalists. In this respect, the actual rhetorical community of media's rhetorical vision, especially in relation to the ideal of democracy and freedom, involves all pro-democratic actors. More specifically, the court partakes in the vision for democracy and press freedom by rescuing independent radios from a repressive ordinance. The Alliance in their democratic agendas are also integral to the media rhetorical community.

Media in general are portrayed as guided by two sanctioning agents. The first comprises the contextual factors like the TPA, Constitution of Nepal, the Supreme Court and democratic mainstream. The TPA provided a reason for media to look up to political parties and the Maoists as principal agents of change. The agreement also called upon the pro-democratic front for solidarity, where media could naturally claim a share. Besides, the 1990 Constitution is a constant point of reference in the papers' assertion of media freedom. Article 13, in particular, protected the press by prohibiting censorship, closure and seizure of the press and was a basis for the SC to rule against the prohibition on FM stations (*THT*, "Stars Are Born"). Thus, the SC functions as the main sanctioning agent for the news media. Likewise, a democratic mainstream represented by parliamentary parties ensures a legitimate protection to independent media. This was also where the Maoist insurgents could claim a political share.

The second type of sanctioning agents for media include the universal factors like freedom of press, right to information and power of the people's voice. The papers take these as integral to democracy and as the main legitimizing aspects for Nepali media in their struggle against the autocratic regime. These are the sources of convergence between the parties and the media. Also, the SC regained its image as a

protector of the Constitution when it imposed stay order against the media ordinance, in favor of the FM radios' right to broadcast news. This is to say, adherents of freedom and rights contribute to the construction of a protagonist persona. The government's claim to have ensured total press freedom meets dismissal because it infringes upon media independence by debilitating dissenting outlets, detaining journalists, and curbing their mobility by denial of curfew passes. In this way, the violator virtually gains a villainous self. A simple inference from these narratives is that the promise of adherence to the norms of democracy and press freedom became fundamental to the possibility of collaboration among the parliamentary parties, the rebels, and the independent media, while the infringer, the royal regime, stood facing these forces.

The pro-democratic media are attached with four principal sagas. The SC stay order against the ban on FM newscast marks the first important occasion for the independent press. This also counts as a major systemic rescue lent by the country's apex court. It evoked then a hope that the judiciary redeemed itself to support the democratic Constitution by thwarting the regime's anti-democratic designs. The Media Mission's report in March 2006 proves another meaningful boost in Nepali media's struggle for press freedom. By exposing the press situation in the country during the royal rule, the international media representatives validated what the national outlets were voicing all the time – that the royal regime had camouflaged its repressive moves against democracy and press freedom. Then, the restoration of the House itself is one unforgettable occasion for Nepali media. It begins an era of freedom of expression and equally signifies the culmination of independent media's constant advocacy to achieve democracy. Finally, the nineteen-day movement counts as an opportunity for media to assume a meaningful presence in the process of historical change. Media could then safely claim a share of credit in the change for having backed the movement to its culmination.

### *Support for Peace*

The international community participates in at least two rhetorical visions. These are 'advancement of democracy' and 'end of the conflict.' The vision of advancement underlines the need of restoration of democracy against the king's autocratic rule. The international community in general was not indifferent towards the fact that the parliamentary system was suspended, Constitution manhandled,



freedom of expression suppressed and Nepal being turned into an autocratic state amid heightened war between the national army and insurgent Maoists. Restoration of democracy would normally reactivate the parliamentary procedure, retract the Constitution and normalize the electoral system ensuring broad participation of people. Nepal would then regain a universally accepted path of governance. Moreover, with the Maoists committed to a multiparty system and peaceful mass movement, the issue of restoration was even more pertinent. It is here the international community asserted their symbolic presence in a bid to help sustain the vision of democracy. Consequently, they pressured the king to return power to people's representatives before the protests could turn too big to tame, and to respect the rights of information, mobility and survival. They even declared non-cooperation to the regime for its vindictiveness against democracy and people's representatives. Instead, they endorsed the SPA's decision to collaborate with the Maoists and advocated persuading the Maoists to stick to peaceful means in their fight against the autocratic system. They asked the Maoists to respect human rights, to continue the ceasefire and to follow the path of non-violence.

Naturally, the vision for ending the conflict complements institutionalization of democracy. Nepal's long-drawn Maoist conflict was a kind of eyesore in both national and international arenas. End of volatile situation was in the interest of regional powers, especially India. Conflict resolution in Nepal was a part of the "regional stability and peace," against the potential conversion of the country into a "hotspot of crisis" (*TKP*, "Crucial Phase"). In this sense, the peace process would literally have to take the Maoists along. Exclusion of the Maoists from the process could only fuel conflict when signs of more solution-oriented overtures had begun to surface in the post-TPA days. This vision, however, contrasts with two dominant advocacies publicized in the post-TPA phase. The first, palace-party reconciliation, which is explicitly the American position and implicitly the Chinese, ignores the surety of prolonged armed conflict at the exclusion of Maoists. It is the advocacy of a midway compromise and abrupt betrayal against the SPA-Maoist understanding that was to last till the election of constituent assembly. The second advocacy is about the need to make the Maoists surrender their arms before joining the SPA-led democratic movement. This even underlies military weakening of the rebels before they qualified to enter into the mainstream politics. But both of these ideals failed to make any mark

due to the SPA's sustained negotiation with and inclusion of the Maoists in the process of conflict resolution.

With these contested discourse positions, the international community forms an important rhetorical community. But, there appear hard, soft and intermediate stances of countries, organizations and their representatives. For example, the Americans were very critical about the Maoists joining the mainstream with their weapons, but appreciative of the SPA leaders for being able to persuade the Maoists to join the peaceful movement. China assumed a soft line of non-interference but advocated the coalition of constitutional forces. This suggestion, nevertheless, implies ostracizing the Maoists. Likewise, India shifted its position from accepting multi-party democracy with constitutional monarchy to 'Nepali people's verdict' indicating its approval for a republic. Europeans in general showed an intermediate position; they suggested a tripartite peace negotiation between the palace, the parties and the Maoists while asking the palace to abdicate power and the Maoists to renounce violence. The UN and its representatives showed greater concern on larger questions of conflict resolution, non-violence, human rights and freedom of expression. However, the international community's collective stance suggests best wishes for Nepal and respects the positive visions of peace, democracy and development in Nepal.

Both contextual and broad sanctioning agents characterize the international community's stance. Among the contextual factors are the TPA, the ceasefire, democratic parties, and democratic movement. The TPA is considered a legitimate point of departure for the Maoists' formal participation in the process of being integrated in the political mainstream. The Maoist ceasefire would draw international community's attention both in absence and presence of it. For instance, the absence of ceasefire intensified the talk of military support and imposition, and brought forth the question of international mediation. The presence of it foregrounded the idea of support for its sustenance towards national reconstruction. Likewise, the international community unanimously endorsed the parliamentary parties as the main stakeholders of a democratic nation. Their advocacy on change put the parties in the center. This is to say, to a foreign power like the USA, the alliance with parties validated the palace's hold on power. To the European community, the Maoists got legitimacy in agreement with the parties. To America, again, the parties lost some of their validity due to their alliance with the Maoists. The democratic movement was an acceptable

development so far as it aimed to establish the parliamentary system and aimed at ending the problem of insurgency.

The ideas of party-palace reconciliation and collaboration between constitutional forces count as the main pro-establishment sanctioning agents voiced by some of the key foreign powers like the USA and China. On the contrary, the issues of fundamental rights, sovereignty, rule of law, human rights, peace process and good governance feature as some of the obvious universal guiding principles reflecting the international community's positive overtures in Nepal. These factors emerge as essential for the "advancement of democracy" (*THT*, "The Making of Sense"), which also entails guaranteeing a proper functioning of public media (*TKP*, "Camouflaged Repression"). In particular, respect for human rights and improved rights situation would validate Nepal's participation in UN peace-keeping operations. But absence of these questioned Nepal's legitimacy in such participation. For example, such condition was stated in Amnesty International's call for reviewing the "compounding restrictions on civil liberties and press freedom" in Nepal regarding Nepal's future qualification to partake in the UN peace missions (*THT*, "Closing Openings").

At least four events can be marked as sagas in connection with the international community. As with other actors, the TPA was acclaimed as a path-breaking event by the majority of foreign powers except the USA. The UN as well as the European community considered the agreement to clear the path towards re-institutionalization of democracy and resolution of Maoist conflict in Nepal, with its "potential to transform the armed conflict into a bid for a lasting political solution" (*THT*, "As the World Turns"). The TPA exposed the official line of the USA since it continued to dismiss the parliamentary parties' alignment with the armed Maoists. The TPA could then signify to India a moment of success in terms of the supposed facilitation by Indian politicians in forging the agreement in the setting of New Delhi. Second, the extension and breach of Maoist unilateral ceasefire equally made international concerns for Nepal audible. The extension meant a further validation of the agreement and that of the international community's expectations that Nepal would lead to peaceful settlement of armed insurgency. But it exposed the US line of indifference to Maoists' positive overtures since it did not officially welcome the ceasefire extension (*TKP*, "American Paranoia"). And the breach of ceasefire was

taken with equal degree of alarm as Maoists' unfortunate decision. The scary aspect of the breach literally highlighted a constructive aspect of ceasefire.

Besides, the nineteen-day people's movement is significant in terms of international concern. There were constant international alarms as regards human rights violations by the security forces. Diplomatic consultations surged up both in the palace and the party offices. Issue of coordinated stance on Nepal's crisis gained prominence amid the diplomatic circle. The movement brought foreigners to a symbolic unity at least for setting a bottomline for the king – to return power to people's representatives. The king's April 21 address is a culmination of such unity and explains why diplomats exerted pressure on the parties to accept the king's offer of forming a new government through a consensus prime minister. The address is the diplomats' success. And the Alliance leaders' rejection of the king's offer signifies their failure in that it registers their shallowness in understanding the psychology of protestors in the streets, who were either demanding reinstatement of parliament or abolition of monarchy and forthright declaration of republic. The reinstatement of the parliament on April 24 was not much of a delight to some of the diplomatic community, who would not like to see the king's complete subjugation against superiority of the radical communist agenda of constituent assembly. For those who wanted to see democracy back to the track, the event would give a reason to be optimistic. As a proof, "[a] number of countries from near home and overseas ... pledged their support for the gigantic task of national reconstruction" (*THT*, "Boost for Bonanza").

### **Rhetorical Phases of April Movement**

A synthesis of the fantasy themes, major narrative types and visions uncovers at least three broad rhetorical categories in the six months' editorial representation. These include the aspects of resurgence, revitalization and restructuring, more or less signifying three historical phases including the April Movement and its aftermath. This is not to say that the April Movement is one strictly linear chain of events. Embedded in the major movement were several events showing progression and termination at certain points. For example, narratives of judicial activism, split in RPP, municipal elections, American stance on Nepal's transition, and Maoist extortion drives in the movement's aftermath, among others, have their own individual structures and lives. They merge into and lend impetus for the rhetoric of

movement with contributory fantasy themes and rhetorical visions. This is to say, the 191 days was not a single historical phase but a composite of complementary exigencies that contained certain rhetorical patterns and contributed to the discourse of resurgence, revitalization and restructuring.

### *Resurgence*

April Movement is the culmination of the rise and maturation of political conciliation. It is the making of a resurgence of pro-democratic political activities out of the state of long-drawn stagnation marked by ideological division between the parliamentary and armed forces. The movement's underlying rhetorical actions involve the revival, growth and mobility of political actors towards a vision for change and political dynamism. It is, however, a tricky task to locate the exact date of revival. Since the struggle for democracy was almost like a timeless phenomenon preceding and following the king's direct rule, political resurgence can be considered to have become visible following the royal takeover of February 2005. The takeover gave parliamentary parties an awakening that their unity was crucial for safeguarding democracy and Constitution against the dictatorial ambition of a king. Indirectly, the putsch also made Nepalis in general reflect the value of democratic freedom and unacceptability of autocracy.

It is not that the takeover triggered an immediate full-fledged political resurgence. According to an analyst, no political demonstration could take place against the king right after the takeover. There was a kind of stagnation since political parties did not dare to come to the streets, and the conscious populace remained silent. Only the civil society came to the streets boldly when the parties were lame and weak, to stand as their crutch (Pahadi 10). When the parties began to oppose the takeover, they did it in a way only to show their presence, albeit weakly. Another critic remarks that the earliest party-led demonstrations were too small and weak to give any sense of pro-democratic resurgence against the militarily fortified royal regime. Political leaders who showed a ritualistic presence in cadre-based protest rallies got chased, beaten or jailed, while the general people refused to help. According to this critic, the mass behind the party-induced protests was so small that a demonstration begun at Bhotahiti would not have people enough in number to fill a police truck when the

rally reached Ratna Park (Sharma 55)<sup>1</sup>. Yet another commentary on the parties' activities reveals a poor form of party-induced resurgence preceding the TPA. The parties' mobility was then confined to some sporadic protests of students and youths around Kathmandu's public campuses. Leaders could also be seen with a few hundred cadres around Ratna Park. When the royal government restricted political mobility in these areas, the protests shifted to the crossroads like that of Baneshwar, another major thoroughfare in Kathmandu. Reports of minor clashes with the police and injuries of leaders and cadres featured intermittently in few private television channels (Rimal 34). That was all one could sense about a democratic movement before the signing of the TPA.

Resurgence became prominent from somewhere out of this limbo of urgency for movement without the support from the general mass. The post-TPA editorials lend us only a little ground to presuppose the genesis. We know from the editorials that the seven-party alliance was already in place, and they were proactive in bringing the Maoists to the negotiating table. In addition, we are also told that the Alliance had accepted the agenda of constituent assembly and the Maoists multiparty democracy. The TPA was signed amid unilateral ceasefire but the government's posture was visibly antagonistic. Debate and bargaining must have been intense before forging a common vision of constituent assembly as a bottomline for peace and complete democracy. The TPA, therefore, was the culmination of this earlier, mostly behind-the-scene resurgence, and equally marks the beginning of a phase of open resurgence against autocracy. The agreement was a point of departure for a new era, characterized by the resurrection of the political parties with new confidence and sense of direction (Pahadi 10-11). Both the parliamentarians and the insurgents appeared in a new light, both vowing to revisit past mistakes and to retain the new-found alliance till the accomplishment of complete democracy. The resurgence vision appeared to manifest in the end of enmity, a show of 'statesmanship' and 'political acumen' in a bid to forge an anti-establishment political coalition. The agreement's immediate fallout involved weakening of the king's power against the surge of power and confidence in the parties (Sharma 57). In a broader sense, it created a spirit of resurgence also in general people by increasing their energy to fight for democracy

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<sup>1</sup> Adjacent locations on a central thoroughfare at the heart of Kathmandu. The proximity suggests scanty participation of political activists then.

and lasting peace (Pandey 231). Nepal was then set to overthrow the twin foes of autocracy and insurgency with a single blow of peaceful movement.

Resurgence covers three stages of the post-TPA political transition. The first shows convergence of principal political actors – both protagonists and antagonists – with a number of rhetorical agendas. The second explains different forms of activism carried out by the main actors in order to achieve their respective agendas. The third stage describes the nature of confrontation with clear account of trigger, crisis, climax and dénouement. This three-stage resurgence covers the editorial discourse till the end of the movement. This also represents the rhetorical visions of restoration of democracy and peace and at the same time fortifies the principal ideal of constituent assembly.

Convergence lent foundation to the April Movement. The inception of the pro-democratic alliance itself was based on what Bormann postulates as a symbolic common ground, general consensus or ‘meeting of the minds.’ Such symbolic coming together was guided by the complementary rhetorical visions of the inevitability of peace and democracy and urgency for a peaceful movement. Primarily, the decision of the Alliance and CPN-M to sign the TPA itself culminated from a mutual understanding of common social reality, which is that that autocratic monarchy was the key hurdle to an inclusive nation, and abolition of autocracy the only path towards peace and prosperity. This simple principle of convergence manifested in the physical collectivity of a million or so protestors during the April protests.

Convergence is seen to have occurred in binary forms: pro-democratic and pro-establishment. The pro-democratic convergence is also a pro-movement or anti-establishment alliance, while the pro-establishment form embodies anti-democratic or anti-movement convergence. The TPA is both a culmination and root of major pro-democratic political convergence for the April Movement. It carries the rhetorical vision of conciliation and progress, in which the Alliance and the Maoists participated before agreeing to its 12 points. The context of the agreement is that the parliamentary parties showed readiness to forfeit the 1990 Constitution and constitutional monarchy and complied with the principal Maoist demand, the election of CA, and the CPN-M agreed to lay down arms in acceptance of multiparty democracy. So, the agreement marks an anti-establishment coalition, the beginning of a bi-polar conflict situation with autocratic monarchy in the other pole. In its own merits, it is a vision to resolve the crisis of ten-year long Maoist insurgency through a

peaceful uprising against the palace-led establishment. Thus, its byproducts are twofold: the end of political enmity between parliamentarians and armed Maoists, and the formation of a solid anti-royalist power alliance to abolish the autocratic system.

*TKP* and *THT* editorialize this convergence of alarm with congratulatory notes. While *TKP* acclaims it as a “groundbreaking” accomplishment to “establish lasting peace in the country” (“Unprecedented”), *THT* names it a “historic development ....a major step towards the resolution of the ten-year old insurgency as well as of the current political and constitutional stalemate” (“Come with the Wind”). Similarly, while *TKP* acknowledges the convergence of UML and CPN-M as a potentially decisive alignment for establishing democracy, *THT* gestures invalidation of any effort to isolate the Maoists and an end of the possibility of reconciliation between the parliamentary parties and the palace. Thus, convergence for pro-democratic movement generates two apparently confronting dramatis personae: one, the pro-movement coalition of the SPA and the CPN-M that aimed to abolish autocratic monarchy, the other that would most likely retaliate any moves of the coalition. Convergence, however, has the Maoists as potentially unstable actors, at least for the possibility that they would resume arms any moment. And they did resume arms early January, presenting an ambiguous persona of partners in democratic movement and a military outfit in bloody confrontation with the palace-led national army. Convergence, however, was an ultimate point of return for them in that they came to reinvigorate their alliance with the SPA through a second-round understanding in March.

The aspect of convergence is not, however, immune from its binary, the aspects of divergence. The first aspect of divergence takes the American stance against the Maoists, as represented by the views of ambassador Moriarty, President Bush and Donald Camp, who stressed disarming the Maoists before the latter’s entry into the democratic mainstream. It was a reasonable line in view of its long-term ramifications in that an unarmed political group could more comfortably assimilate into a democratic society than the armed one. But the American stance embodies an anti-current side in such circumstances when the SPA had already signed agreement with the CPN-M, and the latter could in no way be sidelined midway from the transition from insurgency to peaceful resolution. Thus, though the SPA-Maoist pact appears unnatural to Americans compared to a palace-party counterpart, the TPA,



with its spearhead towards CA, dismisses this line. The follow-up SPA-Maoist understanding further invalidates the American advocacy of palace-party convergence. Thus this aspect of divergence cannot hold itself for long as the pro-democratic convergence takes the lead towards mass protests.

Another aspect of divergence involves the collective persona of the foreign diplomats in relation to the parties, the king and the protestors. The narrative of their congregation around the SPA leaders following the king's address has clear political implications. The first is the protection of monarchy's supremacy and, second, the distancing of the parliamentary fold from the CPN-M. It could also imply a strategy to create rupture between the supporters of constitutional monarchy and adherents of downright republic within the Alliance, to help monarchy to retain a limited space even if the monarch-led government fell to the mass movement. Even if it were not the diplomats' empathy for monarchy, it would not fail to suggest their inability to make sense of the republican agenda brought forth by the agitating mass. But this aspect of divergence evaporates with the SPA's rejection of the king's offer and the diplomats' admonition.

The streets of Kathmandu and other cities as well as the rural areas form the main settings of convergence during the nineteen days. To cite from Shyam Shrestha, the physical manifestation pro-democracy convergence takes a large share of Nepali population, almost five million people of all classes, strata and parts of the country, who had taken an active part in the political revolution. The people that went to the streets comprised 'one fifth of the population,' as Ulvia reports. The physical aspect is also seen in Maoists' participation in the movement, which actually followed their commitment to lend peaceful support to the SPA-led agitations. Moreover, convergence manifests in making the movement greater than a "cadre-based agitation" (*THT*, "The Making of Sense") within the first four days of April by inviting diverse sections of Nepali society to lend support to the agenda of restoring democracy.

Above all, political convergence for the movement dramatizes an interesting upsurge of people from the size of a 'truckload in Ratna Park' to more than a million in the Ring Road. The latter size is the victorious convergence represented more or less as the pro-republican mass. This idealizes and acts to define the modality of state restructuring in a later phase. Meanwhile, the pro-republican front works in the reinstated House and the SPA-led government and ensures the convergence with a

more radical insurgent group, the Maoists. The post-movement convergence marks collective attempts to ensure meeting of the minds though oftentimes dismissed as the dominance of Maoist demands. The finality of convergence can be seen in the 25-point code of conduct signed in an environment with no intervention of constitutional norms, and against no opponent and a strident dissenter.

Activism, the second dimension of resurgence preceding the April protests, surfaced in anti-establishment, pro-establishment and diplomatic forms. The first embodies the vision for peace and democracy and entails CA as the main sanctioning agent. The vision presupposes the end of active monarchy, restoration of democracy and a constitutional format for holding CA elections. The second, the pro-establishment form adheres to active monarchy and its roadmap for democracy without democrats, which precluded any form of ideological pluralism during the king's rule, let alone democracy and CA. The diplomatic form represents both the 'international' and 'strategic' aspects of the interests of foreigners in Nepal's transition. This form also idealizes the vision of peace and democracy in Nepal in contested forms with either democracy or monarchy in the priority point of reference.

The anti-establishment activist front comprises political parties and the judiciary. The party activists to feature most include Girija Prasad Koirala, Madhav Nepal and Prachanda, the principal actors behind the TPA and its ramifications. Koirala was regarded to embody the stature of 'a fatherly figure' behind the historic agreement. He appears in the giving end in this stature setting conditions for the monarchy for the latter's own benefit, yet reiterates his belief in constitutional monarchy. Nepal features in the same position as Koirala, offering conditions for the monarch to benefit from the TPA and the unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists. Prachanda's image is of a firm advocate for formation of interim government, election of CA and establishment of republic. He presumes a no-compromise position with regard to active or constitutional monarchy.

The judiciary's activism manifests in two respects. First, the SC challenged the royal government: first, with the December stay order against the ban on newscast in FM radios, and by the dissolution of the RCCC. Both steps evidence judicial activism, and are major setbacks to the monarch against his mission to establish an absolute regime. The other aspect of judicial activism involves the commitment of NBA to lend support to the pro-democratic movement, which was also one of its resolutions in the tenth national conference early March (*TKP*, "Intoxicating Bar").

The anti-establishment vision restoration of democracy, election to constituent assembly and establishment of republic operate in a broader setting of Nepal as a place of transition. Thus, the editorials represent the national issues taking the entire country as a place of happenings. Besides, a number of other settings including party meetings, streets, cities, towns, villages and, above all, the Ring Road of Kathmandu carry the essence of anti-establishment activism.

Pro-establishment activism forms a major binary complement to anti-establishment activism. Thus, its oppositional nature corroborates the movement's dynamism and urgency. The main dramatis persona contained in this aspect is the king. King's activism features in the role of the main antagonist in the editorials' general portrayal. The king's negative persona is alternatively characterized in the actions of the palace, monarch, the ruler and the government. Members in king's cabinet partake in his activist visions and have their own individual personae. Tulsigiri appears the most prominent pro-establishment activist at the beginning. His activism is in being a most vocal critic of the SPA-Maoist alliance and of the SC. Very often he paints a self-image of democracy's archrival by castigating the political leaders even with such epithets as fanatics and terrorists. The papers deplore him as audacious, equivocal and a stereotype of Panchayat mindset. Giri's activism subsides long before the dénouement, when he becomes inaudible and invisible and thus stops making editorial topics.

Three other ministers in the king's council of ministers, Ramesh Nath Pandey, Kamal Thapa and Shrishya Shamsher Rana, participate in the pro-establishment activism, and in perceptible negative personae. While Pandey came forth early enough to dismiss the TPA calling it a product of foreign dictation (*THT*, "The Usual Suspects") and later to resist international peace mediation of any kind (*THT*, "Saga of Bad Ideas"), Thapa and Rana emerged after the reshuffle of cabinet early December and remained committed to all major royalist adventures till the movement's culmination. In fact, Thapa showed activism from the point he caused a split in RPP and formed his own royalist front, RPP-Nepal. Then he was there to impose municipal elections and to claim its victory. He led the anti-movement security retaliation, reportedly till much later than any of his royalist colleagues. Rana made his presence felt as soon as his induction to the royal cabinet, especially by warning the private media about severe penalties for their democratic inclinations. He made topics towards the middle of the nineteen-day agitations and went silent.

There is diversity in the main plotlines associated with pro-establishment activism. These mainly include such fantasy themes as proclamation, consultation, rejection, accusation, imposition, atrocity and indifference. Proclamation and political consultations are the actions of the king himself. The editorials take note of at least six speeches by the king, half of leave marks in contemporary history and confirm his real activism: the takeover speech of 1 February 2005, the penultimate address of 21 April 2006 and of 24 April 2006. The February 1 proclamation inaugurates the king's direct rule, his actual activism as a monarch supported by diehard royalists. The April 21 address, in which he offered to partly relinquish power with a consensus prime minister, gives the first sign of his admission to the force of people's movement. The April 24 address, through which he reinstated the House, ends his active rule and thus his activist position. The remaining three other speeches involve the ritual addresses of 1 February 2006 on the completion of his one-year direct rule, of February 19 on the usual Democracy Day and of April 14 on the Nepali New Year. In all these addresses the king reiterates his roadmap and tries to justify his activism but with little or no regard for the parliamentary parties and ongoing mass protests.

Consultations include the king's communication with both directly contributory and non-contributory actors. The dialogues with US Ambassador, Indian Foreign Secretary, Indian Ambassador, Chinese Ambassador, and India's Special Envoy Karan Singh are considered contributory in that these meetings, held at crucial hours, suggested likelihood of transformation. If not transformation, these could evidence the king's increasing concerns over the ongoing political crises and thereby sustain his activist position. On the contrary, the meetings with Taranath Ranabhat, Speaker of the defunct House, and former prime ministers Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Surya Bahadur Thapa are reported by the papers as non-contributory since these were just ritual presumptions for showing activism.

At least five complementary plotlines substantiate the pro-establishment activism in its negative form. These include rejection, accusation, imposition, atrocity and indifference. Rejection entails a number of incidents: castigation of the TPA by royal ministers, denial of the prospect of international peace mediation, disagreement with the claim that the municipal elections had failed, unwillingness to reconcile with the political parties, and denial of curfew passes to media workers during the movement, to name a few. Accusation refers to royal ministers' dismissal of the TPA as a terrorist alliance acted upon in foreigners' behest and, above all, Home Ministry's

claim of Maoist infiltration in the SPA-led protests. And imposition involves the curfews and prohibitions against political activities. Similarly, enforcement of ordinances for media regulations, finance regulations and terrorism control form the main pro-establishment activist persona.

Likewise, atrocity involves the security forces' violent retaliation during the protests. The evidence was that about a dozen protestors lost their lives and above five thousand got wounded in the protests. The killing of 11 civilians by a drunken soldier in Nagarkot, and the involvement of some policemen and soldiers in extortion and robbery are representative charges of atrocity, which rather defiled the activist image of the regime as a whole. Indifference is also related with two very serious cases: first, the regime's non-reciprocation to the four-month unilateral ceasefire despite the urge of national and international well-wishers to capitalize it for fence-mending with the parliamentary parties; and second, its disregard for the necessity of taking meaningful steps to mitigate the effects of insurgency. Another relatively less alarming show of indifference involves the government's disregard towards international community's warnings about the deterioration of human rights situation in Nepal during extreme militarization against Maoist insurgency.

The settings of pro-establishment activism function in a striking binary, involving the insider-outsider, native-foreign and self-other positioning of royalist and non-royalist actors. The royalists claim an insider position and seek to castigate the historic TPA which, to them, was of foreigners' making and in foreigners' interest and advantage. Thus, the insider rhetorical position suggests that the political parties who were the advocates of democracy, peace, republic and constituent assembly did not belong to Nepal. What sanctioned the belongingness then was submission to monarchy in its divine self and native agenda. The papers register this native-foreign royalist stance by commenting on the regime's indifference towards international community's advice to collaborate with the political forces before and during the first half of the main agitations in April. The pro-establishment activists also appear to claim standing in the giving end of the binary, with such agenda as setting up roadmaps, imposing ordinances, deciding harsh actions, rejecting lawful demands, dismissing genuine counsels, punishing supposed violators, and retaliating mass agitations. Even the phase of multiparty era, later, sees its inception in the palace, through the king's proclamation on April 24 notwithstanding its being the effect of the pressure of the indomitable mass movement.

The last component of activism, the diplomatic aspect, concerns international actors. In the first place, it takes the persona that equivocates at crucial moments, mainly the US representatives who welcomed the TPA and at the same time show reservation for Maoists' share in it. They advised the king to utilize the Maoist ceasefire towards peace-building yet asked him to harden stance against the Maoists until the latter gave up arms. They approved the parliamentary parties' movement for democracy but disapproved their decision to take the Maoists along. They endorsed the agenda of peaceful democratic movement and the upsurge of mass participation yet tried to persuade the Alliance to drop midway to accept the king's offer. Their diplomatic gaze, therefore, is more at the power-centers than the power base, the general mass. Both papers emphatically lampoon this double-standard.

The equivocal activists also present divided viewpoints on the peace process in Nepal. One line stood for alliance between parties and palace with Maoists out of the mainstream. This is, in fact, a sustained US-led rhetoric of peace-building in Nepal, which *TKP* terms 'American paranoia,' and *THT* takes for the reflection of 'historical anti-communism.' China reportedly took a similar line, which subscribed to the need of coalition between constitutional forces, meaning the pact between the palace and parties. *THT* shows its contention by stressing that any collaboration that excluded the Maoists was not going to work ("Lunch with Friends"). The other perspective voiced a prescription for tripartite collaboration of parliamentary parties, CPN-M and the palace. Though this claimed merits of being timely in view of keeping the monarchy in the system, it was an arduous course for the time. The reason is that the regime disdained pluralism against which, consequently, the SPA-Maoist alliance set bottom-line for CA and establishment of republic.

Diplomatic activism then includes the supporters of an ameliorative approach. Among them, UN Secretary Kofi Annan stands out as the principal advocate of a multilateral and timely collaboration among the country's main political actors. He promised to lend all possible help in the peace process, and cautioned the government about the cases of human rights violations during the April protests (*THT*, "Scent of a Solution"; "Fire in the Lake"). Indian special envoy Karan Singh symbolizes another remedial persona. He visited Nepal in the time of deadlock, when both the regime and the protestors were in no mood to find a point of conciliation. Singh's meeting with the monarch is believed to have ensued the first royal address on April 21, which for a

time sounded corrective because the king at least relented to make an overture to the political parties.

Two other personalities register similar remedial attitudes about Nepal's crisis. The first is Gunther Baechler, the special advisor to Swiss Government for Peace Building in Nepal, who emphasized "feasibility of a political solution" through a "process-oriented and non-interventionist" third-party mediation (*THT*, "Door in the Wall"). Baechler's suggestions somehow contradicted the then collective diplomatic interest in Nepal which either displayed an attitude of tutelage at relatively peaceful times but prevaricated during overwhelming crises. The second personality is VM Lebedev, the then Russian Chief Justice, who reportedly suggested a corrective function of judiciary. Lebedev stressed the use of laws as tools for democracy through enhancement of "an independent and fearless judiciary" (*THT*, "Candid Counsel"). The notion of consolidating law for democracy complements the activism of the SC itself, which it showed by foiling the regime's ordinance-induced repressive measures.

Another form of pro-movement activism is portrayed in connection with the international actors. Especially, the visit by the representatives of International Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression Mission to Nepal in March embodies one of many efforts to restore press freedom during the king's direct rule (*THT*, "After All These Months"). In addition, the papers' urge for international scrutiny of the protests established the importance of pro-movement foreign mobility in Nepal. In one of its April editorials *TKP* makes three emphases. Firstly, it says "Unarmed demonstrators should urge international community to raise voice against the autocracy." Then it demands US intervention in regulating the use of M-16 guns against protestors. It also invites other "friendly countries" to "oppose this illegitimate regime vehemently" ("Whose Infiltration?"). This indicates that diplomatic activism was important part of the political movement in 2006.

Confrontation is at the heart of any mass uprising. It is the base of the rhetoric of movement for its being a symbol of human actions, both in the form of discourse and physical deeds (Cathcart 96). Confrontation underscores as much the state of agony as agony's physical manifestations in eventful rebellions. At the very base of such rebellion is people's motive to abolish an established order and build a new establishment, not necessarily to restructure the old system and share the fruits of change with the members of this defeated system (Scott and Smith 30). Confrontation

equally underlies a moral cause for uprising and, therefore, delineates people's move towards optimistic changes. Such progression then is "enacted by the juxtaposing of two human forces or two agents, one standing for the erroneous or evil system and the other upholding the new perfect order" (Cathcart 99). The April Movement was the outcome of a between the adherents of two different forms of government: autocratic monarchy and multiparty democracy. Political transformation in Nepal preceding, during and following the April Movement generally embody monarchy's activism as the main root of confrontation, while the parties' fight for multiparty democracy just, timely and in line with the universal forms of rebellion.

Confrontation is a basic rhetorical tenet of the editorial representation of April Movement. The two papers reflect its discursive complexities beyond the bloody clashes between security forces and the Maoists, the encounters of party cadres with the police during mass gatherings, and the violent security retaliations during the nineteen-day agitations. These are also the factors that a poorly informed witness would relate with the movement time. But the rhetorical aspect of confrontation takes note of these incidents as some of the manifestations of much broader ideological, emotional, and pragmatic conditions.

Confrontation matures in the editorial discourse through the phases of inception, development and dénouement. The inception of confrontation leading to the April Movement lay in the TPA itself. The TPA echoed Scott and Smith's notion of confrontation as guided by the urge to "supplant" a system (30), rather than to share the system. The TPA also capitalized what Cathcart calls the idea of the presence of adherents of both evil system and a new order, where the king was taken for a main "hurdle" against realizing the democracy and the parties for agents of forward-looking solutions. For example, *TKP* called the TPA a product of the leaders' "political acumen," "extraordinary statesmanship" and political maturity, which also reflects acknowledgement of what Scott and Smith would term "demonstration of worthiness" after "effacing immaturity, weakness and subhumanity" (Scott and Smith 30) in the parties. Moreover, the TPA carried the parties' expression of guilt for their past weaknesses. This situation attests to Cathcart's idea that no person "can be of the movement without an act which recognizes one's own guilt or complicity with the system and which commits the individual to the *new* order" (100). The parties' admission of past mistakes – while in the parliament or the government – and the



Maoists' promise for self-criticism were taken to evidence their genuine commitment to the movement and political change.

The papers also take the TPA for a prelude to a confrontation between the royal regime and the parties and hold the former more pressured to evade destructive collisions. *TKP* welcomes it as a source of confidence for the people "to fight autocracy" ("Unprecedented") because it was the culmination of Maoists' ceasefire and their pledge to redirect political strength to usher a peaceful movement. The paper reiterates the parties' message by inviting "pro-democratic forces, international community and nationalist Nepalis to welcome the agreement and to contribute to a peaceful and prosperous future for the young generation." *THT* takes a neutral line stating that the government's response to the agreement would "determine the country's future course" – confrontation or reconciliation ("Come with the Wind"). *THT* also hints the possibility of the end of collaboration between the palace and the parties which would otherwise isolate the Maoists and invite the relapse of insurgency. Thus, both the papers underline the foreboding of confrontation following the TPA, where the royal regime stood apparently in the defensive.

Confrontation was grounded in the regime's refusal to respond to the TPA, which also marked the regime's dismissal of the rhetorical vision of democracy and peace. While the king, the head of the regime, maintained suggestive silence about the convergence of the parliamentary parties and the Maoists, his ministers hurriedly denigrated the possibility of giving the TPA any credence for evoking hope for peace, let alone capitalizing its peace-building agenda amid the ongoing unilateral ceasefire (*THT*, "The Usual Suspects"). The king's only response was the reshuffling of his cabinet in December 2005. With appointment of diehard royalists like Kamal Thapa and Shrishya Shamsar as Home and Information ministers, respectively, he made it apparent that he was revamping his fortress, and not taking heed of the adversary's conditions and calibers. Such attitude and stance implied a greater tension registering the king's tenacity to his own vision of democracy without democrats. In contrast to the TPA's signal for positive outcomes, the king's attitude confirmed his readiness to confront further. The regime in this sense displayed an open disregard for the concerns related to peace and democracy, which were to be ensured through a democratic process.

The regime's refusal to reciprocate the CPN-M's unilateral ceasefire clarified its insistence to continue the conflict, irrespective of the grounds for continuation. It

would equally pass an alarm that the parliamentary front rather dare not meddle with the royal roadmap. The papers share the belief that the regime's non-response gave the Maoists a plea to end the ceasefire in January and pushed the country to further confrontation (*TKP*, "Unfortunate Decision"; *THT*, "The Razor's Edge"). Even then the government remained adamant for February election, amid a highly provocative atmosphere, while the Maoists vowed to foil it at all costs and the parties to recoil from it.

The royal government's adamancy for the municipal election had one obvious implication. This was its long-term mission to establish legitimacy through the propaganda of involving majority pro-royalist voters, which would also lend him a plea to move towards parliamentary elections the following year. The election propaganda thus marked the inception of a greater tension. Faced with the parliamentary parties' boycott and CPN-M's military reprisals, the election signified an ideological war between two distinct claims of political relevance, one that pushed for multiparty democracy leading to republic, and the other that defended absolute monarchy through tertiary recognition of civic rights. The first was a convergence of contesting ideologies – social-democratic, liberal Marxist and Maoist – characteristic of the SPA-Maoist alliance. The other, also a convergence of royalists, stood for a revival of a strong feudal system led by a barely responsive monarch.

The inception of confrontation amplified questions of political values, with both sides intent upon devaluing each other's legitimacy and historical relevance. For example, the royalists denounced the SPA-Maoist alignment as an illegitimate brainchild of foreigners against Nepal's sovereignty. The alignment, on the contrary, countered the royal regime as an unconstitutional, temporary and irrelevant regiment of royalists. The royalists reiterated their promise of remaking democracy and reinvigorating Nepali nationalism which they believed were emaciated by the political parties during their post-Panchayat heydays. The SPA stood firm in their commitment to restoring democracy and rescuing the country from the 'clutches' of autocratic monarchy. The rhetoricity of these identical claims, therefore, calls attention to the question whose sense of democracy was more valid and historically relevant at that time.

Confrontation advanced in the stages of foreboding, crisis, and dénouement. The stage of foreboding showed in tension the same personae ever diverging but with no potential for forging a common agenda. The 1990 Constitution, which had a

ground for their convergence, was held hostage under an executive monarchy. The palace had kept no room for a pluralist structure after the February takeover. Thus, the ideological divergence led to a constantly widening rupture, which both papers lament as a cause for pushing the country towards a greater confrontation (*TKP*, “Finger Pointing”, “On Collision Course”; *THT*, “Arctic Dreams”, “The Razor’s Edge”). The foreboding was about violent clashes and bloodshed, which would be greater blotches than sporadic protests and security interventions. The regime, having disregarded the chances of avoiding such distant yet destructive fallout, stood in high alert for retaliation against the immediate, the “nationwide storm of democratic protests” committed by the TPA’s signatories. The palace persona in this sense embodies the main villainous agent of confrontation in the prognosis of a greater crisis, while the parties retain a protagonist face in their agendas of democracy, peace and upgrade of national ethos.

The stage of crisis ensued with at least three exigencies: the termination of unilateral ceasefire, the enforcement of municipal polls, and the second SPA-Maoist understanding. The end of four-month unilateral ceasefire in January, which both *TKP* and *THT* ascribe to the regime’s non-response, was the first cause of violent encounters between the Maoists and the state forces. Following this, the Maoists pressurized the regime through a two-pronged strategy, which included a commitment to lend a peaceful support to the SPA program, and continuation of People’s War. But such duality sufficed to cause despair among the general people. The municipal polls were enforced amid the boycott by parliamentary parties, a week-long strike by the CPN-M, and even after a large number of candidates (at least 600) had withdrawn their candidature, seats had outnumbered the candidates, those who retained candidacy had gone into hiding (*THT*, “Swallowing Camels”), and when there was no guarantee of physical protection to the would be elects (*THT*, “Schindler’s Ark”). The oppositions and the corporate media dismissed the election as a farce, a fiasco (*TKP*, “Poor Show”; *THT*, “On the Murky Pond”, “Flawed Perspective”), while the government claimed to have attained results that would give the election legitimacy. The main critical aspect of confrontation in the post-election scenario, therefore, was that while the government would use force to establish the legality of the elections despite the fact that the elects would hardly feel confident to function, the opposition could plan for a greater force to foil the government’s designs.

The second SPA-Maoist understanding reinforced the TPA's thrust for peaceful movement against the regime and made the anti-establishment protagonist convergence wider and stronger. Following the understanding, the SPA announced a four-day nationwide strike in April with a prospect of peaceful backing from the CPN-M. The renewed pact carried the crisis even further as the possibility of bloody confrontation loomed large in Nepal's political milieu. The government could try to "preempt the parties' programs in the pretext of Maoist infiltration" (*THT*, "Dissent Is Democracy"). The Maoists would equally misuse the strike and instigate violence ("Reinforcing Move"). In both cases, the spirit of peaceful movement would be marred since violence would be an inevitable aspect of political confrontation.

Crisis developed into climax early April. The regime showed a mood of retaliation by amending TADO at a time the parliamentary parties were trying to "bring Maoists to the mainstream politics" (*TKP*, "A Meaner TADO"). The CPN-M announced an indefinite ceasefire in the Kathmandu Valley three days before the showdown and established its ultimate collaboration with the SPA. The amendment of TADO hinted at the intention to 'punish those who oppose the government' and to further 'alienate the Maoist rebels, common people, political parties and the free media.' This also clarified the regime's unwillingness to resolve the Maoist insurgency and politically tackle the pro-democratic opposition. The regime's aggressive mood, as well as the inevitability of more crises, manifested in the arrests of high-level leaders, party cadres, professionals and rights activists in the eve of the four-day agitation.

When the strikes began on April 6, the government's offensive strategy surfaced in massive use of force leading to injuries and death of protestors. This led to the phase of climax involving both aggressive and ameliorative actions of the regime and the Alliance. The regime's aggression was mainly represented by the Home Minister, under whom security battalions baton-charged, fired tear-gas cells and rubber bullets and frequently shot the protestors. The SPA's aggressive line was of the protestors in the streets, majority of whom demanded complete dethronement of the monarch and the establishment of republic. The climax then was the rise in mass uprising and subsequent security retaliations. The mass protests continued with greater participation of non-partisan people each day. Initially owned by the SPA and the CPN-M, the movement ultimately became an agenda of the mass and left the regime with only two options: "resort to more brutal repression or restore the House

of Representatives” (*THT*, “The Forgotten Frontier”). The government kept to the first option even when the mass rose in million inundating Kathmandu’s outskirts and forced their ways into the city’s interiors. The swelling mass encouraged the Alliance to continue the peaceful agitation in spite of violent security offensives.

The regime opted for ameliorative tactics only when its aggressive stance was difficult to sustain. The king held series of interactions with diplomats and some relatively neutral political figures like former prime ministers. A visible consequence of this act was the address of April 21, in which he offered to lend the parties a scanty opportunity to form a consensus government under his own custody. This offer, however, failed to complement the regime’s vision for peace-building without building peace with the political parties. The offer equally confronted with the mass, who regarded it as an ideological bait aimed at fishing the falterers in the SPA, who might choose to stop the movement midway and join a monarch-led government. The offer, though reformative in the face, did not prove a proposal of conflict settlement because it was largely understood as a plot to abort the republican agenda of CA, the agenda the Maoists, the pro-republican non-Maoists, and a large population of young protestors voiced in the streets. Meanwhile, a faction of international community active around the royal palace who subscribed to the king’s offer tried to persuade the SPA to accept the king’s bait. The Alliance, who were bound to the republican agenda through the TPA and were too diffident to disregard the republican mass, turned down the internationals’ admonitions. But the Alliance’s rejection of the royal offer was not completely voluntary. The papers indicate that there was an ameliorative faction in the SPA that comprised those who could easily be disoriented from the ongoing republic-oriented protests. However, regardless of the motives and circumstances, the dismissal of the royal offer meant the end of a curative overture and signaled the urgency towards the movement’s immediate dénouement.

Confrontation marked at least two consequences in its dénouement: fiasco and victory. The regime had partly failed even before the signing of the TPA in November 2005. The first one year of king’s absolute rule, as judged by the international community and the corporate media, had failed to ensure good governance and the king had become unsuccessful (*TKP*, “February One”). The king’s assessment of his own regime and of the ongoing crisis was not close to the reality (*THT*, “Same Time Last Year”). His vision for peace and democracy was exclusionary, with no principal political actor like the parliamentary parties willing to

converge to it. Thus, the regime's fiasco was more a finality of a series of moral, political miscalculations than a single condition or defect in one action. The first miscalculation was on the potential of the TPA and its positive impact on Nepali people's psyche. People's faith on the TPA manifested in the April agitation, but the regime refused to make any conciliatory proposals. The government's adamancy was clear in its indifference towards the Maoist ceasefire. According to the papers, instead of trumpeting for the municipal elections and revamping the Council of Ministers, the government should have put forward substantive plans of conflict settlement and economic development, mended its relationship with the democratic forces and announced ceasefire for a new round of negotiation with the CPN-M.

The municipal election was one of the regime's strategic failures that thwarted its designs for legitimacy, and gave a setback to its preparation for parliamentary polls the following year. The fact is that the regime had considered parties' boycott and Maoists' threat of disruption negligible, and showed cocksureness in anticipating huge civic participation in the polls. The regime seemed equally short-sighted about the resistance by the SC but faced the defeat of two of its important schemes, such as from the stay order against the banning of FM newscast and the dissolution of the RCCC. During April agitations, the regime witnessed its infamy when civil servants joined the mass movement. The regime then appeared in fissures when majority of its ministers who were vociferous during the pre-movement heydays kept quiet inspiring a belief that the king and few of his supporters were forsaken to pursue the final adventures of consultations and failing actions.

As stated earlier, the king approached a sympathetic coterie of diplomatic circles to further his agenda to allow premiership to a consensus leader, but to no avail. Intent upon lending monarchy an immediate benefit of escape regardless of the republican voice pervading the country, the sympathizers faced the parties' refusal. This gave a final blow to any future overtures minus the republican course that upheld either the restoration of democracy or a complete disbanding of monarchy. Thus, in a broader sense, the end of the direct royal rule explains the fiasco of monarchy to keep its ideals intact. But this also embodies the failure of the opportunists in the royalist coterie, who emerged during the regime's glory days but went invisible and silent when the mass outscored any of the regime's retaliation measures. It equally was the failure of the foreign advocates of royal supremacy.

Victory did not include any particular agent or persona. The credit of victory would not go directly to the SPA, nor to the CPN-M. It would not either go to a public figure from either a leftist or a rightist political fold. The credit in a sense is distributed unevenly among many actors, in which a collective persona of “Nepalis” receives the largest share. Nepalis epitomize a generic mass who had a simple vision of peace and political stability, for which they converged in the streets all over the country. The ‘Nepalis’ persona involves “millions of Nepalis” who rejected violence, and who ‘braved bullets, baton charges and teargas shells’ but “refrained from violence” (*TKP*, “Int’l Community”). The persona, in *THT*’s words, is the ‘sea of humanities that swarmed the streets,’ the ‘martyrs’ and ‘all brave protestors.’ Also, victory did not mean the abolition of monarchy, which could mark a full culmination of the movement. So, as the editorials suggest, only a phase had ended with the restoration of the House. The government to come had the responsibility to complete the remaining tasks underlined in the TPA. This is to say, the tasks of mainstreaming the Maoists and holding CA elections waited ahead.

In a nutshell, the rhetorical phase of resurgence marks a number of milestones for the movement. Above all, it was when the principal political actors emerged in full shape. The SPA and the CPN-M, despite frequent show of weaknesses, forged a pro-republican convergence and gained the fame of protagonists against the autocracy of the royal regime and its complementing security forces. The judiciary rose as an activist agent complementing the democratic movement. The international community showed mobility in ambiguous faces of alternating success and failure in their attempt to influence Nepali political actors. The corporate media appeared gradually emboldened along with the surge of political activism against autocracy. Similarly, the main confrontation occurred in clear sequence of inception, crisis and dénouement. The phase also marked the end of the era of active monarchy in Nepal through the simultaneous restoration of popular faith towards political establishments.

### *Revitalization*

The end of protests was not the end of movement. It was only the dénouement of a major confrontation. The king’s withdrawal from political mainstream was only the completion of one phase of exigencies, not the end of all exigencies. Thus, the restoration of the House of Representatives only marks the consummation of an aggressive rhetorical crisis after the meeting of one major agenda stated in the TPA.

Only that the power-poles were reshuffled as one of the major actors, the SPA, took the helm in a seemingly no-opposition environment. It is the parliamentary parties' repossession of an earlier status but with a different rhetorical stance and challenge. The parties were now settled in the giving end from the receiving end, as defendant rhetors than aggressors. The Maoists claimed to become major beneficiaries after the Alliance came to repossess the legislative and the executive. The rebels thus assumed a pro-movement posture with their agendas for resettlement yet to be addressed by the newly formed establishment.

The post-movement discourse on changes highlights complementary ideals of rescue and recuperation. Foremost, the reinstatement of the House itself signified a rescue of the entire parliamentary system from the confinement of autocracy. It was the revival of a history, the fruits of 1990 people's movement, no matter whether the Maoists identified with this larger saga. The restored House embodied liberation from heightened militarization that could suffocate everyday life. Provisions like the TADO could have crippling effects in people's psyche no matter whether they partook in terrorist acts or not. The end of the royal regime saved the country from a possible dictatorship. Likewise, the restoration of the House also rescued the country from a political chaos that would come from the spontaneous yet disorganized mass of people in the streets. The mass was not just the political cadres, professionals, civil society members or civil servants, but a formidable inflow of Maoist militants, non-partisan common people and the royal government's infiltrators. Any force beyond the purview of organized leadership could make the situation uncontrollable inviting a greater bloodshed.

The end of the protests gave the SPA a big moral salvage. In fact, the mass protests had made the Maoist agenda of outright republic heavier than the restoration of the House. The SPA would meet a political defeat having to mould their future courses in the Maoist fold. To go by the fundamentals of the TPA, it was not in their priority to uproot the institution of monarchy or ostracize the monarch but to end the autocratic regime. Allowing the protests to develop further to the extent of physically attacking the royal palace or the government's structures was very likely to meet a more violent military reprisal making the reins of the movement slip completely out of their hands. Moreover, the SPA was literally expected to lead the ensuing process because their peaceful means were internationally endorsed. Then they would need the bureaucracy, the judiciary and the security institutions to keep their future



governance intact. The restoration of the House gave them a safe landing in the sense of not destructively meddling with these pertinent structures. Their ideals of peace and democracy got best manifested in the decision to accept the restoration of the House.

The movement also rescued the Maoists from having to extend their armed conflict, which meant sustaining a ‘huge war machine.’ This is to say, the movement liberated them from the jungle and brought them to a wider and more amicable society. Thus, no matter whether they liked the restored House or not, it was the only channel to achieve the goal for republic and to give credence to their commitment to peace. By giving legitimacy to their readiness to come to political mainstream, the House and the government prevented their further international isolation as a terrorist outfit. However, the Maoists still needed further salvage once in a position to bargain their political positions through peaceful means. When the SPA, their partner in movement, assumed the role of a giver, the Maoists became “confused and insecure.” They faced a “political dilemma” realizing that the “proponents of peaceful movement,” the seven parties, had finally “snatched the credit of the successful movement” from them” (*TKP*, “Cranky Maoists”). The SPA’s legitimate ascent to the helm of government further projected the Maoists’ violent line as inappropriate and anachronistic for the country. But there was hardly any reason for them to be cynical of the times. Complementary to the parliamentary parties’ commitment to bringing them to the mainstream life, the society was not necessarily vindictive towards them. In fact, “despite the bloody past,” the people were in a “mood to forgive them” (*TKP*, “Cranky Maoists”). Thus, the fact that the society and people did not entirely shun their gradual entry into the multi-party mainstream sufficed to be their main political rescue in the post-movement time.

The reinstatement of the House was also a timely rescue for the king no matter whether he did it by being forced or at will. If his intentions about democracy and love for Nepali people were genuine, his decision to agree to the SPA’s demand was partly to the benefit of his own image. By returning the sovereignty to people, he saved himself from two possible blemishes. The first was the situation of having to get embroiled further in conflict with Nepali people with parties in the frontline. This was a sure road to further international disgrace and isolation. Second, he was sure to be blamed for all economic and political mishaps the country would have on record in the ensuing days. Apparently, the Maoist insurgency had already become too big for a

military quelling, and further militarization would surely outpace basic developmental activities channeling more and more resources to keep the security forces intact.

A more critical view considers the movement to have led to the rescue of the entire system. The House declaration in a sense completed the rescue. Particularly, the renaming of the government as Government of Nepal and of the army as Nepal Army after dropping the age-old prefix 'Royal' made the system look "much more fresh." The main functional aspect of this renaming was that it liberated the entire country "from royal burden" (*TKP*, "Sovereign House"). Likewise, the scrapping of Raj Parishad meant absence of an organized royalist coterie that fed on the national budget which could otherwise be directed to development sector. Then the decision to tax king's property justified the redundancy of keeping an expensive royal family while majority population lived under poverty and the country as a whole was faced with the challenge of reconstruction from the losses of decade-long insurgency. In totality, the movement rescued Nepali people from the state of despair. There could be no imminent crossfire, no unexpected military offensives in the movement's aftermath. To go by the ideals of the TPA, the movement subdued the main enemy, the regime, and brought two partners face to face to adjust and cooperate with each other. This stage, albeit mired with predispositions and lack of acceleration, sufficed to evoke optimism in people. At least the resignation that none of the leading forces could ensure peace and development subsided for a time. It was no doubt a source of pressure to the parties in helm, and gave reason for Nepali people to anticipate positive actions from both the SPA and the CPN-M.

April Movement was not only about a rescue in totality, but also a process of recuperation from an unfortunate to a more optimistic state. Overall, the movement marked what Chaitanya Mishra calls "a key political break with the past" (1). The past, according to the editorials, was characteristically dark and infested with problems of denial in different levels. Foremost, it was marked for a "painful memory of history" because monarchy had "played, time and again, with Nepali people's democratic aspirations" (*TKP*, "Int'l Community"). This includes the history of complete subjugation during the Ranarchy, of the denial of constituent assembly and democratic constitution after the 1950 changes, of another cycle of subjection by Panchayat after 1960s, the post-1990 multi-party era enmeshed in political instability plus Maoist insurgency, and the king's rule following the takeovers of October 2002 and February 2005. The April 2006 changes relieved Nepalis from a long-drawn

sense of loss. First, they at least recovered the parliamentary system dissolved in 2002. This was not a small achievement after having to “fight hard for nearly four years to win back their freedoms and sovereign powers” guaranteed in the 1990 Constitution. This gain was leading to a higher achievement of constituent assembly which had been “hanging fire for 55 years leading to unnecessary political and constitutional crises about the sources of state powers” (*THT*, “New Dawn”).

Nepalis regained a kind of moral boost after the success of April protests. The past, as noted above, involved more losses than gains, characterized by leaders’ “failure to keep promises,” and people’s “lost opportunities” for peace and well-being. Thus, the sense of frustration weighed “so heavy on the scales” that small gains seemed to have “paled into insignificance” (*THT*, “Love Me Tender”). Moreover, the “deteriorating political and security situation” amid the failure of the political actors to end insurgency through “an adequate response” sufficed to “raise serious concerns over what might be in store for the Nepalis” (*THT*, “No Ordinary Time”). But in the movement’s aftermath what mattered at least was the visibility of results, both immediate and distant. While the reinstatement of democratic system marked a victory of the major rebellion, with the autocratic front retired to a margin, the decisions following the reinstatement pointed at the gain of the constituent assembly and a more inclusive system.

Most important of all, the success of the movement substantiated the healing of the wound of decade-long insurgency. And, in fact, the healing had begun as early as the signing of the TPA when erstwhile enemies had forged an alliance for a common goal of drafting a new inclusive constitution. The TPA ‘buried the hatchets’ of the former adversaries, the parliamentarians and the Maoists, and thus embodied the revival of hope for peace. The extension of ceasefire boosted the hope further, and its breach gave despair. To people living in “a country marred by violent insurgency” (*TKP*, “Int’l Community”), only the realization that there would be no crossfire, no unexpected raids and bombing in public places would suffice to breathe a sigh of relief and carry on daily chores in the most harmless ways. Talks of good governance, end of terrorism and institutionalization of democracy, which the king reiterated to fortify his takeover rhetoric, could only give a fleeting sense of peace. Neither could the Maoists’ alternation of ceasefire and crossfire ensure that people were safe. The peace rhetoric of both the regime and the Maoists signified “peace of

the graveyard after causing a further huge loss of lives and property” (*THT*, “The Razor’s Edge”).

When the movement picked up tempo to end the autocratic system, any show of faltering by the Alliance leaders – especially at the pressure of international community and the leaders’ greed for power – would mean “more bloodshed and more chaos for several years to come” (*TKP*, “Int’l Community”). The movement’s culmination, therefore, marked the return from despair to hope, from moral loss to political gain. When the House declared itself sovereign and could forge a number of decisions, the country was believed to move “onto the right track of healing the wounds of insurgency” then to “emerge soon as harmonious, peaceful, democratic and fast-developing country” (*TKP*, “Sovereign House”). Then with the signing of the ceasefire code of conduct between the government and the Maoists, ‘subversive activities such as extortions, lootings, kidnappings ... killings’ were expected to “become a thing of the past” (*THT*, “The Gokarna Code”). The time ahead could be marked for moral, psychological uplift.

The pre-movement representation of Nepal was of a country in an unhealthy state. Ill health resulted from bad governance including a number of signifiers of decline. In other words, the country’s ill health was not solely the result of royal autocracy, but was a historical reality attributable to the parliamentary era. With royal takeover to exacerbate the condition, Nepal then could rank as “one of the poor countries in South Asia bogged down with bad governance” (*THT*, “Boost for Bonanza”). The February 2005 royal takeover worsened the poor health as “virus of corruption ... seeped into all walks of lives,” “adversely affected the development activity” and “eroded the fabric of democracy.” The effect of corruption was big enough to “bleed the country white” and that the country could no longer afford the system that spread the virus (*TKP*, “Corrupt System”). But the movement evoked a vision of recovery from such ill-health. The Alliance-led government’s commitments for peace could represent the doctoring of the nation. What the country needed further was a mechanism to weed out corruption and maintain transparency so that the corrupt would not “siphon off public funds through fraudulent means” (*THT*, “Here We Go Again”). The post-movement setting was most appropriate for a genuine effort to give corruption ‘an unsung burial’. Only that citizens and the government needed to be alert to “track down the corrupt and bring them to book” (*THT*, “Boost for Bonanza”).

The vision of recuperation equally involves the recovery from the state of abject poverty. Poverty was the result of age-old suppression by a feudal system represented by royals and royalists. And Nepal as a whole was known for having a large population of “hapless poor people ... reeling under absolute poverty and brutal violence” (*TKP*, “Finance Ordinance”). Such condition was the result of a declining economy, which during the king’s rule was put in “shambles” (*TKP*, “Disillusioned”) and pushed “downhill” (*THT*, “Reality Check”). In fact, the post-movement government took account of an actual picture of the country’s “precarious economic health,” especially owing to rampant expenditures during the king’s direct rule (*TKP*, “White Paper”). For example, the White Paper presented by the Finance Minister revealed 751.1 million rupees spent by the royal family alone in the first nine months of the direct rule. This was double the amount appropriated by the royal government, and six times more than what was set aside before October 4, 2002. Accordingly, the total non-budgetary expenditure of the royal regime after the February takeover amounted to Rs. 3.17 billion. Also, inflation surged up to 7.7 percent during the king’s rule, and economic slump went down to 1.8 percent. With such precarious economic state, it was possible that the royal government “would have collapsed itself after some time due to bankruptcy and turned the country into a failed state” (*TKP*, “White Paper”). The country’s economy was indeed in need of reversal.

Recuperation to a large extent suggests the need of cleaning. The post-movement government was in a sense faced with cleaning the “financial mess” created during the royal regime. An immediate task included cancelling the purchase of the hardware for RNA, such as the Russian M-16 helicopters and, above all, probing if it could into the “freak trips made by the king and the crown prince.” Besides, there was a need to investigate other irregularities such as loyalty payments for royalist journalists and banquettes for “Hindu fanatics” (*TKP*, “Misappropriation”). On more critical ground, the new government was required to work out “ways of making the guilty accountable for every paisa of the taxpayers’ hard-earned money and every single dollar of the international donor funneled thus far as developmental aid” (*THT*, “Here We Go Again”). Overall, the challenge ahead was to “speed up economic reform to improve service delivery to the poor” and “boost investors’ confidence and economic stability” (*TKP*, “White Paper”). Economic boost was closely linked with the people’s moral upgrade, let alone an opportunity for the

new government to regain credibility. It would complement people's aspirations for a secure and prosperous future.

Recuperation had implications for physical suffering and recovery. The post-movement time was marked for giving as well as experiencing relief from injuries and pangs of death. The immediate beneficiaries of relief would be the people wounded in protests, and the families of those killed in police firing. Creation of Janaandolan Primary Health Care Fund (JPHCF) during the movement was one of the milestones to ensure physical well-being of more than five thousand injured people. At this point, general people, professionals and different organizations contributed to the collection of treatment fund, which reached up to 20.8 million within a month, while many hospitals around the country provided treatment free of charge (*TKP*, "People's Fund"). Apart from medical treatment of the wounded, which was the result of volunteering by medical professionals, pro-democratic people and organizations, the new government was prepared as well to compensate loss of lives. In fact, relief would require "monetary arrangement" to the "widows and parents of those killed and injured." This is where the SPA became proactive and decided to provide "one million rupees each to the martyrs and two hundred thousand rupees to the injured" (*TKP*, "Martyrs' Rights"). Thus, the Alliance's role as a protagonist could manifest in its participation in the vision of recuperation.

However, a true form of recuperative gratitude would have to transcend monetary compensation. It had to be an opportunity for socio-economic uplift of the family and relatives of the victims. Since the dead and the injured were the only bread earners for their families, the best the state could do would be to provide regular income to the families of the dead and job opportunities for the injured. More specifically, it would be a greater relief to provide free education and free health services to the children of both the dead and the injured, and jobs for their kith and kin (*THT*, "The True Salute"; *TKP*, "Martyrs' Rights"; "People's Fund"). Any form of neglect in the care of sufferers would be a repeat of ingratitude. A government born out of the injuries of thousands of people had as much to do for nation-building as for repaying the sacrifices. People were not fully sure that the new government would not be bogged down by other priorities – both important and petty – and repeat ingratitude "to the worthy sons and daughters of Nepal" exactly the way the post-1990 governments had done to the sufferers of the 1990 movement (*THT*, "New Dawn"). Besides, at least two other acts would compensate loss and complement relief. The

first had to do with penalizing the oppressors of the movement, and the second involved the urgency of improving security situation in the country. Overall, the vision of relief and recuperation was more of prognosis than actual occurrence, but it was very essential for the manifestation of novel experiences in the post-movement times.

Important to note, the vision of recuperation is often contested by a tendency of relapse. The condition of relapse is manifest in two forms. The first was the fear of retardation due to rupture within and between the parliamentary parties, especially in terms of power sharing and forging common grounds on crucial political decisions. Inter- and intra-party bickering on portfolio distribution, apart from the differences in treating the monarchy and 1990 Constitution, marked a level of uncertainty for general public. In fact, the period of one month following the movement, though a minuscule compared to the time taken by Nepal's political transition, appeared to be too long in view of the urgency of forming a strong government and starting the process of integrating the Maoists. Therefore, even minor differences in opinion or delays in forging consensus on important agendas could give a sense of restlessness to the public. And restlessness would any time erupt into violence such as in the case of Deuba's reported advocacy for the king to retain position of the commander-in-chief.

In greater proportion the apprehension that Maoist would not quit arms haunted common people. At least during one month following the movement, the actions of Maoists largely signified a relapse of uncertainty. The Maoists spoke of the possibility of a breach of ceasefire and an ultimate return to the 'jungle.' A failure to reconcile with the mainstream might give them a plea to start a new phase of rebellion, but this would shatter common Nepalis' hope of living in a peaceful country after ten years' annoyance. The fear of relapse was first caused by the fact that the Maoists had accelerated public interference. People running industries, small businesses and boarding schools continued to bear the burden of Maoists' excesses such as "extortion, intimidation, collection of taxes and militia recruitment" (*THT*, "Promises to Keep"). And the actual trouble was that they had turned deaf years to the requests to stop these acts. The main sufferers of Maoists' repeated interference were both small and big business houses. Interference was "literally bleeding the business sector white" (*TKP*, "Jungle Raj"). The same could be said about general social life since "abductions, killings and extortions" had not ceased completely. And the Maoist cadres still claimed certain areas to be "under their rule," and extorted

money “on the pretext of donations” (*TKP*, “Code of Conduct”). This means that some places in rural areas could still not feel the presence of the government; the Maoists had ultimate say there.

A relapse of conflict between the Maoists and the establishment was imminent in the case of ownership and functionality of local administrative bodies such as VDC’s and municipalities. The government had decided to restore them<sup>1</sup> considering them as crucial for democracy. But it was tantamount to snatching them off the Maoists who had “already usurped local governance in the country” (*TKP*, “Uninvited Fissure”). In a form of manipulation of this ‘bone of contention,’ the Maoists repeatedly made an “outrageous demand” to dissolve the newly reinstated House “as a prelude to holding talks” (*THT*, “Work Now Fight Later”). The post-movement scenario therefore was marked by a sense of vulnerability. It evoked a mixture of hope and despair, confidence and resignation. The major political actors – the Alliance and the Maoists – continued to alternate their role as change-agents and reactionaries. Nepal’s political transition continued to enunciate both extremist and moderate rhetorical stances.

However, the vision of revitalization remained prominent during the entire period. The time saw gradual fortification of the democratic front. The House and the government became legitimate agents of progress and helped diffuse political willpower among both the main actors and commoners. Despite occasional show of rupture in some agendas, the Alliance partners were unified in the agenda of resolving Maoist insurgency. As was common in any democracy, the post-movement scenario was a space for both the defiant and the divergent. Whether they realized it or not, and no matter how reactive they were, the Maoists gradually merged themselves into a culture of reconciliation. For instance, the 25-point code of conduct “ignited a fresh breath of optimism.” The parties and the Maoists “agreed to monitor and govern the truce and create conducive environment for peace dialogue.” The people were feeling relieved, thinking that they would no more “have to put up with awful violence.” Constituent assembly, which was the main “dissenting agenda in the previous peace talks,” was now the destination of both the Alliance and the Maoists (*TKP*, “Code of Conduct”). There was no room for disillusionment in the broadest sense. It was after all the “time to rebuild the nation – brick by brick” (*THT*, “Boost for Bonanza”). The April Movement represented the making of new frontiers by changing both attitude

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<sup>1</sup> The local bodies were dissolved in 2002 by the then government led by Sher Bahadur Deuba.



and aptitude of the political actors. A move to novel experiences through revitalization of political will was therefore the broader spirit of the time.

### *Restructuring*

The six months following the TPA show Nepal as a state in the making. State restructuring was one of the most consistent rhetorical visions in the editorial representation of Nepal's political transitions of the period. Restructuring was the bottomline of agreement between the Alliance and the Maoists and, thus, remained a principal agenda for convergence ahead. Thus, the vision of restructuring was a guiding force in the April Movement; it was the main plea for Maoists' participation and the excess of violence in state's retaliation. Particularly in the post-movement phase, the vision was represented as a "mammoth task of nation-building" or a "gigantic task of national reconstruction" (*THT*, "Boost for Bonanza") now that the collaborating forces were expected to come more closely together to work towards the election to constituent assembly.

The vision of restructuring is manifest in the stages of inception and preparation. The inception stage began as early as the signing of the TPA. For example, the failure of municipal polls due to the parties' boycott amid Maoist reprisal, which gave a setback to the king's mission of attaining electoral legitimacy in the local level, marked a one-step progress in foregrounding the inevitability of democratic forces. The vision obtained a more concrete shape when the royal regime, the main antagonist, retired to political margin. Then subsequent activism of the Alliance-led establishment created surer grounds with a number of preparatory tasks. On their part, the Alliance lent space to the agenda of constituent assembly by passing a resolution in the House. The government released the detained rebels, declared a ceasefire, removed terrorist tags on the senior Maoist leaders, withdrew Red Corner Notice issued against them and invited them for talks (*THT*, "On a New Plane" ; "House Made of Dawn"). The Maoists as well participated in the phase of preparation. They renewed their commitment to the peace process having declared unilateral ceasefire and formed a three-member negotiation team.

The preparatory stage of restructuring was characterized by a need for political actors to maintain high-level discretion while forging decisions. They were expected to work not with vendetta but tolerance and caution. Foremost, it was the phase for discouraging extremism of any sort so that the path to constituent assembly would not

be enmeshed with hurdles. The parties were therefore expected to start reintegrating people into the mainstream. This included taking ‘misguided but untainted’ people back to the system because their exclusion would lead to unnecessary hassles (*TKP*, “Show Tolerance”). But this did not mean exemption to defaulters but heavy penalty. To this effect, the government would have to take action against “some army generals, police officials and handpicked politicians, who vehemently backed the political regime” (*TKP*, “Warning Bell”). Such task would not be easy, but the Alliance-led government would have to ‘demonstrate extraordinary courage’ because it was faced with ‘extraordinary challenges’ of state building. The main challenge nevertheless involved carrying out “necessary deliberations” with the parties concerned, especially the Maoists, “leading to a consensus parliament so that long-standing grievances of the neglected masses [were] suitably redressed” (*THT*, “Call It Courage”). Restructuring was therefore a matter of negotiating political dreams of different sections of the society than just a case of dismantling the old structure and creating apparent administrative territories.

Political convergence after the movement took such form that the SPA, the House and the government became one institution. In such situation there would be no such formality as a parliamentary decision to “stay the hand of the government.” The government could make any deal with the Maoists “beyond the limits of the 1990 Constitution.” Neither would any “domestic and foreign power centers” intervene the government against its move towards constituent assembly (*THT*, “On a New Plane”). Unlike in the past, when peace negotiations had foundered over the disagreement on constituent assembly, the post-April talks had grounds to bring optimistic results. The 1990 Constitution, which had previously overpowered the agenda for constituent assembly, was going to cease soon after the promulgation of an interim constitution. It was even not so much binding as a political consensus based on the agendas of the movement. In a more radical sense, the Constitution could be considered to have been “pronounced dead by the *Jana Andolan*.” The time ahead demanded that the Alliance had to move “clearing through legal wrangling” rather than setting precedent by following any article of the 1990 Constitution (*TKP*, “Warning Bell”). The Maoists as a political party were now more a ‘partner in progress’ than a disruptive rival. Adhering to the old Constitution was tantamount to restaging the armed insurgency. Restructuring was therefore inevitable and free from resistance.

Preparation for restructuring could be seen in two levels. First, there were agendas demanded to be addressed at once. The Maoists had their radical line of dissolving the newly reinstated House of Representatives for forming an interim government, which would then conduct constituent assembly elections. This was also their original stance stated in the TPA as a differing line from the SPA's agenda. Besides an interim government, their proposal for restructuring included "formation of republican fronts throughout the country" and "of establishing autonomous self-governing local bodies without going to election" (*TKP*, "Uninvited Fissure"). This was the demand in direct confrontation with the government's intention to restore local governance as per the old constitutional provisions. Such difference in proposal could indicate a possibility of a greater rupture, but both the Alliance and the Maoists, as stated above, were not in a condition to widen the rift to the extent of creating a political vacuum and giving chance to chaos. Also, such blotches could not outweigh larger questions of resolving the problem of insurgency and moving towards constituent assembly.

Not that the CPN-M alone had radical agendas for achieving the vision of restructuring. UML had equally strong proposals that rather signified urgency of further weakening the stalwarts of the erstwhile regime. These included "arresting and jailing the vice-chairmen and ministers of the outgoing royal cabinet" and converting His Majesty's Government to Government of Nepal and Royal Nepalese Army to Nepal Army. Moreover, UML suggested "slashing the annual royal palace budget from the current rough figure of Rs. 60 crore to Rs. 12 crore" and "dissolving the Raj Parishad immediately." Weakening or marginalizing the agents of regression such as the royals and royalists had to precede crucial decisions for reformation. It was the time to accelerate the pace of resolving armed conflict and giving people a sense of respite and imminent peace. Therefore, the best the government could do to respect the vision of restructuring was to find and appoint in responsible positions "persons loyal to people power" and those who were competent and had "financial and moral integrity" (*THT*, "Time for Justice"). But the situation demanded both constructive agendas and the agents who could help establish these agendas. In the actual political negotiations the agents could be no other than the leaders of political parties including those of the CPN-M.

The second level of preparation involved accomplishment of a number of tasks including the resolution of agendas mentioned above. Initially, the House passed

a resolution for constituent assembly thereby ensuring the public and the Maoists about the government's genuine intention for restructuring. This was followed by annulment of all political appointments made by the royal government, and the withdrawal of all unconstitutional ordinances imposed during the king's direct rule (*THT*, "Refreshing Rollback"; *TKP*, "Govt and Media"). The House declaration of May was a radical jump in the course of restructuring. It marked the end of Shah dynasty in Nepal since monarchy was literally disbanded and the monarch converted into a tax-paying citizen. The king ceased to be the army's Commander-in-Chief and the Army got formally stripped off its royalist connection by being put under the purview of the executive. Overall, the renaming of His Majesty's Government into Government of Nepal, and conversion of Nepal into a secular state marked the completion of at least one phase of preparation for restructuring. Sovereignty came in the custody of people from the Shah dynasty. Then the signing of the code of conduct was culmination of a high-level preparation for state-building. It was a point where the partners in progress, the Alliance and the Maoists, assured each other of their formal participation in the process of restructuring. In fact, the six-month editorial discourse ends with a possibility of establishing peace and democracy within a consensus framework.

The rhetorical phases of resurgence, revitalization and restructuring show an apparent theoretical bearing with SCT. These concepts correspond with what SCT critics (for example, Bormann, Cragan and Shields 288; Antoine, Althouse and Ball 210; Frey 14) call three master analogues: the pragmatic, social, and righteous rhetorical visions. The phase of resurgence shows the main aspects of pragmatic visions like efficiency, bottomline, appropriate action, expedient follow-up, practicality and 'minimum emotional involvement.' While political acumen and spirit of statesmanship shown by TPA's signatories reflects their efficiency, coalition between parliamentary forces and the Maoists and abolition of monarchy remain a bottomline of the agreement. In the same way, peaceful movement features as an appropriate action, whereas boycotting municipal polls and forging a second-round understanding function as the expedient follow-ups of the coalition. Similarly, parties' commitment to the TPA and the succeeding agreements, their regards for the non-partisan mass and resistance to international pressure embody practicality and a show of minimum emotional involvement for a result-oriented action.

Similarly, revitalization corresponds with social analogues which involve aspects of humanness, social concern, brotherhood, friendship, trust, caring, and compatibility. Humanness and social concern are represented in the themes of healing from pangs of poverty and insurgency, respect to martyrs and the wounded, relief programs for the victims' families. The papers' advice to assimilate the untainted supporters of erstwhile regime and people's readiness to forgive the Maoists reflect the aspect of brotherhood. Friendship, trust, caring and compatibility manifest in the parties' attempts to find common grounds for Maoist integration, in the papers' suggestion to treat the Maoists as sons and daughters of Nepal and in the general atmosphere of forgiveness and relief in the days following the April protests.

Restructuring shares the features of righteous rhetorical analogues. Fantasy themes of righteous visions such as correctness, the right way, morality, propriety and impropriety, superiority and inferiority, justness and unjustness are visible in the rhetoric of restructuring. For example, announcement of ceasefire, withdrawal of terrorist tag and red corner notice, House resolution and proclamation and subsequent decision for moving to CA and republic reflect correctness and the right way. The elements of propriety and impropriety relate to Maoists' manners and activities, especially in the papers' recommendation that they are in need of redemption from the habits of carrying out activities normally undesirable in the changing context. The same applies to the critiques on the Alliance partners, particularly in the aspect of quarrelling over ministerial posts, showing reluctance to punish defaulters of the previous government and dillydallying progression to CA.

Furthermore, partners in democracy are implied to be superior and worthy of credence in the new system, while the supporters of autocracy, oppressors in the pro-democratic movement and violators of social norms assume an inferior status unworthy of any favor or space in the changing context. Similarly, resolution on CA, House declaration on people's sovereignty and agreement on ceasefire code of conduct count among the just developments towards restructuring. Continuation of extortion and disruptive activities by the Maoists, eruption of violence at different times and a tendency in political leaders to retain the old order by allowing privileges to the king represent unjustness.

## CHAPTER VII

### Summaries and Conjectures

*Consciousness is only possible through change; change is only possible through movement.* - Aldous Huxley

#### Highlights

A broad objective of this study has been to analyze the nature of representation and involvement of *The Kathmandu Post (TKP)* and *The Himalayan Times (THT)* in different phases of political transitions between November 2005 and May 2006 (191 days). Applying Fantasy Theme Criticism in the political editorials of the two newspapers, this study has sought to answer three broad questions in addition to explicating the vital political exigencies critiqued by the two dailies: what historical narratives build up through the editorial commentaries; what shared visions about the movement and political changes the papers represented; and what inferences can be made about the broader role of corporate media in the April Movement.

Exigencies that came to *TKP* and *THT*'s purview involve the events of high political significance during the 191 days. The pre-movement phase, which covers the period between the end of November 2005 and the beginning of April 2006, literally signals preludes to the main nineteen-day April protests with a number of historical events. The signing of the TPA between the SPA and the CPN-M features extensively as a path-breaking event in Nepal's move from armed insurgency to democracy and peace. Other exigencies which get substantive coverage following the TPA include the Supreme Court stay order in favor of FM radios, extension and breach of unilateral ceasefire, arrests and detention of political and civil rights activists, and cases of atrocities by security wings and Maoist insurgents. Besides these, host of other incidences gain editorial attention including the holding of municipal polls, dissolution of RCCC by the Supreme Court, and the second understanding between the SPA and the CPN-M.

The movement-time coverage reflects a heightened confrontation resulting from the SPA-led protests. The editorials highlight the cases of police violence, injuries and death of protestors, infiltration of vigilantes in the protests, and the royal government's indifference towards the crisis. The papers also comment on the king's crisis-time consultations with foreign diplomats, former prime ministers, his own

ministers and royalist politicians. The king's proclamation of April 21 gets special editorial scrutiny. The editorials show dissatisfaction with the international community's activism to persuade the SPA leaders to accept the king's offer of consensus premiership.

The post-movement editorial coverage starts with an acclamation for the return of sovereignty to Nepali people. The main editorial subjects involve the activities of the SPA-led government, the reinstated House and the Maoists. The editorials describe positive and progressive actions of the Alliance as a new establishment. Among these are the House resolution on constituent assembly, announcement of ceasefire and withdrawal of terrorist tag and red corner notice against the Maoists, formation of judicial commission to probe into movement-time excesses, and annulment of ordinances imposed by the royal regime. The papers also discuss the government's White Paper revealing financial anomalies of the royal regime, explain the milestones of the House proclamation on several structural changes and analyze political significance of the 25-point ceasefire code of conduct signed by the government and the CPN-M. Likewise, the papers criticize the Maoists' sporadic acts of extortion, and at the same time laud their participation in peace talks and agreement on the codes of conduct.

The fantasy theme reading of editorials published during the six months on the above and other exigencies reveals altogether eight narrative types, each representing one dramatis persona (Table 7 below). The first narrative carries the stories related to the SPA's relocation from the streets to the House. The narrative comprises fantasy themes involving the Alliance of political parties as the main protagonist characterized as the principal legitimate political force. The Alliance as a composite front is described as having political acumen and legitimate leadership and as the symbol of hope and optimism. Their positive characters portray them as progressive, pervasive, victorious and inevitable. In contrast, individual leaders and parties in the Alliance feature negatively due to their past records of disunity, split, selfishness and bad governance, and for quarrels over power-sharing and indecision and delays in taking concrete steps for mainstreaming the Maoists. However, the overall image of the Alliance is one of a credible change agent marked by progressive actions, and perseverance both in their confrontation against the regime and negotiation with the insurgent Maoists. The principal setting in which the Alliance functioned involves the streets before and during the April protests and the House and the government after

the fall of the royal regime. The symbolic cues involved suggest broad historical contexts, nature of crises, actions and obligations of the SPA leaders, and collective habits of the Alliance constituents. The cues present the Alliance more as a default force arisen out of the compulsion to tackle odd political circumstances than a noble hero sans any defects.

**Table 7: Movement Narratives and Visions**

Main actor	Narratives	Rhetorical visions
SPA	From streets to the House	Democracy at all costs
CPN-M	A project unsettled	Republic at all costs
Regime	Downfall of a usurper	Democracy sans democrats
Security	Fearful protectors	Fighting for the monarchy
Judiciary	Judicial jolts	Fighting for the rule of law
Nepalis	Nepalis, again	Nepalis for peace and republic
Media	From anguish to agility	Media for freedom and truth
International Community	Critics and cronies	Support for peace

Fantasy themes related to the Alliance represent at least three rhetorical visions reflecting an ideal for democracy at all costs. Foremost, the Alliance's broad thrust signals a mission for democracy involving the challenge for restoration of democracy, ensuring supremacy of parliament, embracing a culture of pluralism, holding the election of CA, and finally converting Nepal into a democratic republic. Establishing peace marks the second important vision that entailed the daunting task of ending the brutal regime, resolving Maoist conflict through a legitimate political process and restoring dignity of the Nepali people. Likewise, ensuring general belongingness to the nation is another rhetorical vision. This entailed the promises for democratic governance, political stability, economic prosperity, and a collective commitment to serve the country and the people. All these visions complement the broad ideal of building New Nepal, which involved the guarantee of constituent



assembly elections, compulsory entry into the era of good governance and general welfare.

The Alliance narratives, nevertheless, evoke two relatively less vociferous competitive visions indicative of the Alliance partners' deterrent inclinations. The question of retaining the old order, especially with the retention of the 1990 Constitution, often marks a blotch in the Alliance's coalition with the CPN-M. The question of whether or not there should be a space for monarchy in the democratic/republican setup emerges as another conflicting vision though in subtlety it signified sympathy for monarchy as a national institution. Thus, both the optimistic and deterrent visions are owned by the Alliance's rhetorical community which comprises the seven parties in the alliance and more apparently NC, UML, NC-D and their respective leaders. But, positively, the Alliance's plans and actions are endorsed by a number of sanctioning agents. The TPA, the mandate for CA, the coalition with CPN-M, and the republican agenda foregrounded by the mass movement form the major contextual sanctioning agents, while in a universal category count the principles of democracy, sovereignty, people's rights, and people's power. Similarly, the Alliance are shown to identify with a number of exigencies as sagas including the TPA, failure of municipal polls, nineteen-day movement, House restoration, House resolution to CA, House proclamation, and the 25-point code of conduct.

The second important narrative type concerns the CPN-M as one of the major political actors of the time. The fantasy themes embody a master narrative of Maoist participation in the movement as a project unsettled or a mission unfinished. The narrative explains that the Maoists' main goal of establishing people's republic was yet to be achieved. This means the movement's end in April 24 had only broken a long-drawn chain of their people's war and that the Maoists had taken the coalition with the SPA only as a strategic modification of their rebellion. Fantasy themes related to the Maoists present them in dual personae of a political party as well as a rebel outfit. The party is characterized with positive aspects as a force with political merits – progressive in its agendas, resolute in its goals and indispensable during the transition from insurgency to peaceful settlement. The rebel persona, on the contrary, is dubious in its intent, complicated in its relation with other parties, subversive in its actions and therefore guilty of several anti-social deeds.

Similarly, the action themes suggest both negative and positive attributions to the Maoists. Subversion of social values, terrorization of people and self-degradation by disruptive activities mark their negative characters, whereas discretion in understanding the inevitability of democracy, commitment to pro-democratic movement and readiness for conciliation with the Alliance in crucial national issues define their protagonist image. Besides, the narrative involves the setting of Nepal as a strategic location of insurgency amid disintegrated democratic culture and the rise of autocratic monarchy, and as a region compelling a heightened international scrutiny. The setting of jungle then embodies the beginning and maturity of Maoist insurgency, complemented in their political shift to the urban setting of Kathmandu as a principal location for competitive democracy. The symbolic cues about the Maoists are related to broad issues of insurgency and crossfire, royal strategies against the Maoists, nature of Maoist rebels, and aspects of their rebellion in the mass movement's aftermath.

Fantasy themes concerning the Maoists constitute a radical ideal of republic at all costs. Three complementary visions corroborate this ideal. The first concerns the establishment of democratic republic through the abolition of autocratic monarchy and the election to constituent assembly. Resolving the problem of insurgency forms the second rhetorical vision, which involves the urge of collaboration with parliamentary parties and logical end of armed insurgency. Similarly, the vision of political settlement is the third important rhetorical vision entailing the need to agree with the conditions put forth by the SPA as well as enforcing their own agendas. Then the Maoists' negative persona reveals competitive ideals like 'subversion is rebellion,' prominence of the Maoist roadmap, and their uncompromising stance vis-a-vis the establishment. The constructive/positive Maoist visions entail a rhetorical community comprising CPN-M as a party, the general mass, the civil society, and a section of the international community. The competitive visions include Prachanda and other leaders, Maoist militia and the general cadres within their sister organizations. But the Maoists are shown to be guided by situational sanctioning agents like the urgency of movement and change evoked in the TPA, the resolution for constituent assembly, ceasefire, and broader questions of democracy, consensus, peace process and respecting people's aspirations. Similarly, the signing of the TPA, the nineteen-day mass movement, House resolution, House declaration and the signing of 25-point code of conduct count among the important sagas owned by the Maoists.

The third among the eight narratives relates to the royal regime as the movement's principal antagonist. Fantasy themes about the regime build a symbolic image of the king as a usurper and his withdrawal from active politics his downfall. In this sense, the regime is defined in terms both of an institution as government or the palace, and persons as the king or ministers in leadership. Its antagonism is characterized by the guilt of a number oppressive undertakings leading to its being exposed, challenged, isolated and defeated. This negative attribution underlies plotlines like repression of democratic forces, disruption of legal and constitutional values, corruption and embezzlement, political gambling, disregard for good governance, and its ultimate defeat for its own short-sightedness. Among the main settings of the regime narratives the country as a whole forms a crucial signifier for the active monarchy's historical anachronism, heightened international scrutiny and political crises marked by autocracy, armed insurgency and democratic movement. Besides, Kathmandu, the royal palace and the streets function as some of the main political spaces, while the twenty-first century forms the main historical context for the rise and fall of executive monarchy. Similarly, the symbolic cues that define the regime involve expressions that reflect such diverse themes as regression, nature of governance, pro-royalist support for active monarchy, the regime's embroilment in heightened agitation, and post-movement review of the defeated royal government.

The regime tends to portray a positive self-image in the sense that democracy and peace form the king's main ideals for enforcing an active rule. But these ideals are ephemeral and easily deconstructed by the characters and actions of the royalist fold. The royal regime's principal rhetorical vision bears the ideal of democracy without democratic parties marked by detention and house arrests of political leaders, curb on mobility and freedom of expression and elimination of strong opponents. Besides, the regime also idealizes consolidation of executive monarchy attempting to divinize the monarch, demonize the democrats and thereby embellish the king's savior image. Also, the king's proclamations reflect at least three competitive visions: corruption free governance, national reconciliation, restoration of peace. But these are never achieved since his actual rhetorical community comprised former *Panchas*<sup>1</sup>, leaders of pro-royalist parties, members of Raj Parishad, security chiefs and hand-picked ministers, all of whom represented an anti-democratic front. Even the regime's sanctioning agents signify inconsistency. Though the regime advocated

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<sup>1</sup> Adherents of the Panchayat system

ending insurgency, restoration of multiparty democracy and establishment of peace, it tried to achieve these goals through the norms of the February takeover which included heavy militarization. So, what the regime aimed was to exercise a martial law, deify the monarch, and demonize the opposition – contrary to the ideals of democracy and peace. Instead, imposition of harsh ordinances, curfews and violence became the regime's ultimate sanctions thereby fortifying its antagonism for democracy. Even the sagas it identified with – the February takeover, municipal elections, and the national Democracy Day – therefore fail to justify its claims of being a constructive and forward-looking establishment.

Ancillary to that of the royal regime stands the collective narrative of the security forces characterized negatively as fearful protectors. The dramatis personae of the security include their formal referents as RNA, APF and Nepal police. These are further described in such metaphoric terms as those in uniform, armed forces, king's forces and gun-toting elements. Their antagonist persona is broadly described with such attributions as ill-trained, eccentric, iniquitous and convictable. There is some positive note only for Nepal Police, shown to bear a potential for redemption and deserving sympathy for being neglected and exploited during the king's direct rule following the February takeover. The plotlines related to the antagonist persona of the security naturally involve acts of misdemeanor, violation, atrocity, brutality, instigation and corruption, while the positive aspects embody redemption and sympathy. In the same way, Nagarkot, Kathmandu (Gongabu and Kalanki among others) and Nepal as a whole are the main settings for the dramas related to the security, especially in relation to the security forces' repressive treatment of pro-democratic protestors. Also, symbolic cues about them reflect at least three aspects of their characters. Places like Doramba and Bhairab Nath Battalion remind of the cases of disruption, atrocities and violation in the past, while Panchayat stands as a metaphor for the security forces' extreme servility towards the regime in matters of training and services.

Though, formally, the security forces acted as a part of the regime and can be taken to identify with the regime's visions, their distinct identities attach them with a broad rhetorical vision of fighting for monarchy. This entails protecting the royal regime at all costs through retaliation against pro-democratic protests and tackling of Maoist armed offensive. In the security's principal rhetorical community lie explicit characters like the royalist Ministers and the 'Thapa clan,' the collectivity of security

chiefs and the Home Minister all of whom were Thapas by surname. There as well is an implicit presence of the US in its anti-Maoist stance. Similarly, sanctioning agents that appear to guide the security are understood in two levels. The first contains their universally perceived duties like law enforcement, crime prevention and protection of human rights. These, however, contrast with what they actually acted upon – militarization, and restriction on people's mobility. Overall, the security embodies a collectivity who acted contrary to what was expected of them, by becoming threats rather than devoted protectors.

The judiciary presents the fifth distinct narrative type. It stands as one of the main offenders to the autocratic regime. As an institution, the judiciary is known as the Supreme Court, the apex court, the court, Nepal Bar Association and 'the judiciary of the country.' Its broad institutional character fails to assume a character of an ideal definer and protector of the country's constitution. Right after the royal takeover, it had remained an inert institution, helpless in domination of the autocratic royal government and diffident in action. But in the post-TPA phase, it takes bold steps as to challenge the regime redefining itself as capable, active, progressive, contributory and, therefore, inextricable institution. Plotlines associated with the judiciary, therefore, include its institutional actions like stay order (against media ordinance), scrapping (royal commission) and 'righting a wrong.' The SC stands as a primary setting of judicial activism against the palace, the setting of unconstitutional moves. Similarly, the symbolic cues related with the judiciary define both bleak and bold characters of it.

The judiciary largely idealizes the vision of a fight, the fight for the rule of law. The fight is justified in the way it challenged the royal government by imposing a stay order against the ban on newscasts and by scrapping the RCCC. The rhetorical community comprises the Supreme Court, Nepal Bar Association, justices and advocates in addition to FM radios and democratic parties, which were the main beneficiaries of the judiciary's successes. Then the sanctioning agents defining the judiciary's positive image comprise the 1990 Constitution and fundamentals of law and human rights. Events like the stay order and dissolution of RCCC could be defined as the main rhetorical sagas in relation with judiciary's active presence in the post-TPA times.

Among the eight narratives, the persona of Nepali people exhibits an unambiguous protagonist identity. Primarily described in neutral signifiers such as

Nepalis, Nepali people or today's Nepalis, the persona initially represents a relatively unheroic and unlucky collectivity of people suffering as victims of poverty, bad governance and armed insurgency. But the victim sees a gradual transition into victors with such attributions of heroism as being uncompromising, defiant, resilient, sovereign yet forgiving. The plotlines about Nepalis, therefore, take acts of rejecting royal supremacy, defiance and rebellion against brutal forces, and victory over the old regime. Likewise, the country as a whole forms the main setting for Nepali people's change from victims to victors. This change is complemented in progressive undertakings of the House of Representatives in the post-movement phase. In the same way, symbolic cues about the persona of Nepalis include both diminutive (with reference to suffering) and aggrandizing (with reference to bravery) signifiers.

Nepalis as the unambiguous protagonist embody the rhetorical vision of peace and republic. This involves peace against insurgency and autocracy, and republic beyond the restoration of democracy. In this connection, the principal rhetorical community entails the broad mass of the 'sea of humanities' mainly comprising young people, professionals, journalists and civil servants. Nepalis as a resultant force are attached with common sanctioning agents like supremacy of people's voice, fundamental rights, freedom of expression, nationality, identity, sovereignty and, above all, representative democracy. In this sense, their sagas could literally include achievements of the 1990 movement, *Jana Andolan II*, and the defeat of autocracy.

Of equal note is the narrative related to the fourth estate. Media in general occupy a remarkable position in the discourse of April Movement, and their narrative represents a transition from anguish to agility, which is to say, from the state of extreme censorship to the gradual withdrawal from it into bold critical scrutiny. The character themes on media take denominators like fourth estate, the press, independent media and journalists. The persona appears in two broad categories of attributions: pro-democratic and pro-establishment. The first is shown to rise from the state of being physically targeted and militarily censored to that of being critical, inevitable, independent and responsible. The pro-establishment fold is characterized as sponsored and hand-picked and therefore integral to the regime's autocratic maneuvers. Plotlines related to media then complement the same positive-negative binary. In this sense, courage, democratic function, social responsibility and voicing for freedom and right of mobility form the positive actions of the media, whereas backing the regime, downgrading the opponent and widening rift between

independent media and politicians count among the negative. As in other cases, the narrative of the fourth estate involves the setting of Nepal as a location for critical press freedom situation under perceptible international lobbying for freedom of expression. Besides, Kathmandu and the streets represent locations for sustained presence of independent media in their efforts to report cases of violence and violations before, during and after the nineteen-day mass protests. Media are also defined with symbolic cues that signify the dark period following the February takeover, the phase of awakening surrounding the TPA and upsurge of media scrutiny during and after the mass movement.

Fantasy themes related to media embody the rhetorical vision of a struggle for freedom, truth and accountability. This signifies a collective mission for freedom of expression and freedom to publish truth and to raise people's voice. Accountability refers to the need of consistency in opposing the regime in a bid to minimize violence, boost the spirit of protestors, publish note of alarm both to parliamentary leaders and Maoists. This further complements the movement's broad vision for restoring democracy suggesting active involvement of media persons and institutions in the pro-democratic protests. These visions suggest the constitution of a strong rhetorical community comprising pro-democratic media outlets, political actors and the judiciary. The visions then enjoy the endorsement of such contextual sanctioning agents as the TPA, the Constitution, the court and the political mainstream as much as of the universal principles of press freedom, right to information and democratic polity. In this regard, media in general would identify as sagas the events like the TPA, the SC stay order and success of the movement with the reinstatement of the parliament.

Last among the narratives on the movement concerns the international community broadly identified in the personae of critics and friends. Among the notable actors are the US, India, China, the European community and the UN and its representatives, referred to as Nepal's important friends, foreign diplomats, democratic nations important to Nepal or foreign powers. These actors are attributed as both pro-democratic and pro-palace pressure agents. As pro-democratic actors, they show concern on Nepal's political crises, are ready to support the peace process yet assume critical positions towards inside actors' decisions and activities. As pro-palace agents, they appear ambivalent, shallow and anti-current in both opinions and approaches. Plotlines in their narratives naturally include both positive and negative

aspects. Advocacy for change, pressure against regression and cooperation in pro-democratic agendas constitute their positive actions, while untimely intervention in Nepal's affairs, inappropriate prescription on crucial issues and shallowness in understanding Nepali people suggest their negative position. One characteristic of the international presence in the movement is the settings of Nepal as a strategic location for foreign scrutiny. Nepal is a point of convergence for both pro-democratic and pro-establishment pressure groups. New Delhi, then, forms a significant setting for Indian connection with Nepal's political affairs. Besides, signifiers like foreigners, American position, historical anticommunism, Delhi's role, among others are the main symbolic cues describing international presence in the period surrounding the April Movement.

The narrative of international presence sustains a broad ideal of support for peace. This entails the vision of advancement for democracy involving the challenge of restoration of democracy and non-cooperation to the royal regime for the ultimate goal of ending conflict in Nepal. A section of international community especially the one representing the American line idealize competitive visions like palace-party reconciliation and Maoist surrender. The progressive ideals, however, pervade through a rhetorical community comprising intermediate actors such as India, the European community, the UN and its representatives, while the hard line taken by the US and seeming neutrality of China remain in the margin as the movement culminates to the king's withdrawal. The sanctioning agents supporting the mainstream visions entail the contextual factors such as the TPA, ceasefire, political parties and pro-democratic movement, which are complementary to the universal principles of sovereignty, fundamental rights, the rule of law and good governance. To the same effect, the events like the TPA, ceasefire, nineteen-day protests and the reinstatement of the House feature as the sagas and thus signify the prominence of democratic norms and sidelining of radical communist agendas.

In the light of ascribing major political agency in the change of April 2006, the findings can be summed up for the most common and representative milestones of the April Movement. Thus, restoration of democracy, establishment of Nepal as a republic, building peace, ensuring good governance, and bringing prosperity feature as the most common rhetorical visions represented by *TKP* and *THT*. These visions gain legitimacy through the sanctioning agents involving principles of democracy, popular sovereignty, fundamental rights and rule of law. Then a strong rhetorical community comprising the SPA, the CPN-M, pro-democratic media, the judiciary,



international actors and, above all, common Nepali citizens owns and sustains the visions. In the same way, signing of the TPA, nineteen-day protests, reinstatement of the parliament, House resolution on constituent assembly, House proclamation on major structural changes and signing of the code of conduct count among the major exigencies identified as the representative sagas in the movement rhetoric.

The reading also reveals representative *dramatis personae*, plotlines, settings and symbolic cues. Nepali people, the Alliance, the CPN-M and the judiciary form the major protagonist personae of the movement for exerting resultant impact towards the political changes. The media assume a minor protagonist role, at least in the editorial portrayal of their activist position. On the contrary, the royal regime features as a principal antagonist with no potential for sympathy or support from the mainstream political actors. The security forces complement the regime's villainy till the end of the April protests, but subside into relative neutrality for their original character of permanent institutions as they naturally become a part of the new establishment. The international community assumes an intermediate persona. This is understandable in the fact that while a majority side with the change process led by the democratic front in collaboration with the Maoists, a section of them appear sympathetic towards the old order at the cost of the Maoists.

Representative plotlines underlying the six months' editorial discourse reflect a broad political tension characterized in a situation of democracy versus autocracy, peaceful movement versus armed insurgency and progression versus stagnation. While the first type of tension involves conflict between major protagonist and antagonist forces represented by the Alliance and the regime, the second contrasts the approaches of the Alliance and the Maoists. The third, then, reflects the existence of two apparent ideological sides within the pro-democratic fold – one that pushed for constituent assembly and republic, the other that would remain complacent with the 1990 Constitution and constitutional monarchy with Maoists' unconditional subjugation to or integration in the political mainstream. Furthermore, at least five settings can be taken to have represented the narratives of the entire phase of the April Movement. These include Nepal, Kathmandu, the streets, the royal palace and the House of Representatives. While Nepal remains a natural center for all political actions and tensions, Kathmandu is a point of their culmination or a shift into newer phases. The streets are locations for conflict and places of exercising power. Likewise, while the royal palace stands as an anti-democratic (or autocratic) power

center before and during the movement, the House functions as a pro-democratic/pro-republic space for all progressive decisions and actions after the movement. Majority of symbolic cues in the editorials reflect the regime's villainy, Maoists' highhandedness, and parties' confrontation with the regime with complementary signification on Nepali people's suffering or supremacy, judiciary's activism, international community's equivocation and media's presence in the change.

The editorial representation of six months' political exigencies as reflected in the narratives, themes and visions summarized above depict the April Movement in three principal rhetorical phases. These include the aspects of resurgence, revitalization, and restructuring. Resurgence basically stands for the discourses related to the context and events of the movement. This suggests the gradual awakening and empowerment of the pro-movement forces led by the seven-party alliance. Culminated formally in the signing of the TPA, resurgence also alludes to the conversion in the insurgent Maoists that made them align with the parliamentary parties for a peaceful movement against the autocratic government led by the king. Overall, resurgence involves a gradual rise of pro-democratic (thereby anti-establishment) front that later succeeded in ending executive monarchy by reinstating the House of Representatives and forging radical decisions towards republicanism.

Resurgence takes the aspects of convergence, activism and confrontation. Convergence is mainly set around the ideological coming together of parliamentary and insurgent forces on the common agenda of establishing multiparty democracy and holding constituent assembly elections. Convergence is fundamentally pro-democratic and anti-establishment. Pro-democratic convergence involves the leaders of the parliamentary parties as the protagonists juxtaposed with the king and the royalists as the antagonists. Contrary to this positive line is the convergence of anti-democratic or anti-movement powers seen in the alignment of royalists and the supporters of executive monarchy. The principal setting of convergence for the pro-democratic line includes the political front represented by the streets of Kathmandu and other major cities, whereas the royal palace forms the main strategic location, for the anti-movement side for devising and forging regression and retaliation.

The phase of activism comprises three representative aspects: anti-establishment, pro-establishment and diplomatic. Anti-establishment activism entails two ideological lines having common programs. While the parliamentary parties heading for a peaceful movement against the autocratic monarchy represent the first

line, the Maoists take the second with their military operations and militant street mobility. When the street agitations begin in April, the anti-establishment characters take a unitary form and assume a stature of the forerunner of peaceful movement. On the contrary, the pro-establishment line projects the king and his supporters in a confrontational side with a common mission of adhering to a regressive, pro-royalist roadmap. The actors in this side dismiss the relevance of pluralism, and the possibility of peaceful reconciliation. Then, the diplomatic activists comprise the international community in at least three personae: the pro-movement, the intermediate and the anti-current. The pro-movement group sympathizes with the parliamentary parties and their new alliance with the Maoists. The intermediate assumes a neutral posture and brings forth objectivist agendas like end of conflict and establishment of peace. Then those taking anti-current position show dissatisfaction with or try to dismiss the Alliance's collaboration with the Maoists and at the same time advocate reconciliation between the palace and the parties.

Confrontation is the culmination of collaboration between the SPA and the CPN-M underlined in the TPA. The agreement indicates the certainty of conflict in its letter and spirit; the signatories identify autocratic monarchy as the main hurdle to democracy and inclusive governance and promise to enforce a peaceful movement to restore multiparty democracy and to hold election of constituent assembly in a bid to establish Nepal as republic. Confrontation, therefore, shows progression in the ensuing crises, particularly in the tension during the municipal elections and the nineteen-day agitations. The denouement of the confrontation, in this sense, is the restoration of the House on April 24. The end of the movement marks victory of the Nepali people over a repressive regime led by an autocratic monarch.

The phases of revitalization and restructuring basically entail post-movement representations. Revitalization in the first place reflects a broad theme of rescue for the major actors. This explains that the end of movement provides a kind of rescue to the Alliance, the Maoists, the monarch and Nepali people at large. With the reinstatement of parliament, the Alliance gets timely exit from the compulsion of furthering a burdensome movement which had outgrown their expectations and surpassed their initial agendas. The movement or its culmination as well gives way to the gradual relocation of Maoists into the mainstream life. It equally saves the monarch from having to exert bloodier means to withstand people against a formidable surety of being abolished by the force of their movement. Then for the

Nepali people the rescue is two-fold: from monarch-led autocracy as much as from Maoist-led armed insurgency. Revitalization further suggests a state of gradual recuperation, both of Nepal and the Nepalis. It signifies a process of healing from political uncertainty caused by a triangular conflict between democrats, autocrats and armed insurgents. It means a return of hope for economically better days against a possibility of falling into more intense financial crisis in the hand of an irresponsible and corrupt regime. Above all, the end of the movement signals a beginning of recovery from the wounds of heavy militarization and armed insurgency, both in physical and psychological terms.

Restructuring portrays Nepal as a state in the making, which sustains as a broad rhetorical vision of the political actors. Before the movement, which largely takes the phase of inception, the vision takes shape in the TPA and manifests in the parties' antagonism against the government-sponsored municipal polls. During the movement this gets expression in the protestors' demand for the ouster of monarchy for republic. The actual preparation for restructuring begins in the reinstatement of the parliament and formation of democratic government. It begins to mature when the new government and CPN-M begin peace talks, and as there are plans to probe into the movement-time excesses and penalize the defaulters. It gains pace through the House resolution for constituent assembly, decision for major structural changes by House declaration and bilateral agreement on ceasefire code of conduct. Because the larger question of moving into republic through the election of constituent assembly prevails over the mainstream politics and there is no apparent rivalry between the central political actors, the ideal of restructuring retains prominence against potential relapse of uncertainty due to internal hassles within Alliance partners, Maoist-led extortions and sporadic disturbances by pro-royalist outfits.

### **Implications for Discourses**

This study contributes to the scholarship in media studies in three broad dimensions. The first dimension, which the narrative and subsequent visions on media represent, broadly explicates the position of media industry as a pro-democratic and pro-movement front during the political transitions of 2005 and 2006. In view of their presence and actions, the media narrative presents the institution merely as a persona to reckon with but not a resultant force. During the time surrounding the TPA, independent journalism suffered heavy censorship from autocracy and was in need of

rescue and professional motivation. The motivation then came to them in part only through a rebellious awakening of the judiciary and resurgence of pro-democratic actors in the post-TPA days. The industry's evolution in this respect is from the state of repression to that of freedom, but not without external facilitation.

However, the fact that media upheld the vision of freedom and truth leads us to a number of inferences about their positive institutional role. Foremost, there was a demand to establish communicative rights both of journalists and general people. Freedom of mobility during curfew hours, freedom for writing and broadcasting according to journalistic needs, and professional safety against attacks and impunity featured among the important rights of the media persons. Journalists' welfare would then ensure the rights of the general people, which was possible only if the government did not dictate the media on their editorial priorities. An atmosphere of trust between media institutions and the government was necessary so that audience could get objective picture of reality from media messages. Such contention, in fact, complements the papers' criticism of sponsored journalism, the deliberate manipulation of state-run media as the government's propaganda tool to demonize its dissenters. Such contention also seeks to justify the advocacy for privatization of the entire media industry. The main ground for this advocacy followed the complaint that state-controlled outlets helped to cause rifts between independent media and the parties in power. This is to say, ruling parties would patronize the state media and deliberately exclude the private outlets thereby leading to their frequent tension with the mainstream politics. Privatization of the media industry could, therefore, prevent such potential rupture by abolishing a manipulative factor represented by the state-controlled outlets.

On a higher plane, the editorials portray the corporate sector literally in the pro-democratic side led by the SPA. Their advocacy of fair, professional journalism, therefore, entails support for a democratic movement though the same could be considered an act of demonizing the anti-democratic side. It is obvious that the corporate sector was sympathetic towards the parliamentary parties, and to the pro-democratic side of the CPN-M, despite apparent weaknesses in all of them. The corporate voice in general emphasizes the need of making the entire media industry empowered and accountable to people and the country at large, which simultaneously gestures that the political front needed to be as empowered and accountable.

The second dimension of contribution to scholarship in media studies has to do with a broader explication of the historical narratives and corresponding visions represented by the remaining seven actors. The narratives constitute important historical subplots and explain the essence of mainstream transformations during 2005 and 2006. The study thus represents what Johan Fornäs calls “contextual current” in media studies having attempted to analyze the intricate social contexts of the production and dissemination of historical meanings (896). The narratives build a particular perspective on the respective actors. For example, the narrative on the Alliance signifies resurgence of a protagonist force in Nepal. We see pervasion of its presence as the principal legitimate power center despite inconsistencies in the constituent parties. In fact, the Alliance of parties is shown more radical in the phases before the movement: in forging alliance with the Maoists, foiling the palace-sponsored municipal polls, and carrying out sporadic protests. During the movement the papers imply the parties’ collective image as the main trigger for mass uprising, but reveal their inconsistencies with reference to their potential compliance with international community’s recommendation to accept the king’s offer of seat to a consensus Prime Minister. The fact that the mass in the streets show adamancy against the royal offer and signal that they would defy the Alliance’s decision to withdraw from the movement shows the parties as bound to people’s verdicts. Their acceptance of House restoration meets wide support leaving only the Maoists grumbling. This proves the Alliance’s inevitability as a lawful replacement of the autocratic front for the time. The post-movement representation shows individual parties mired in petty quarrels, but the Alliance-led establishment (the House and the government) is largely progressive. This more or less signals the relevance of a unified political force in Nepal. The SPA epitomizes a political culture of reconciliation and progress, an unprecedented case in Nepal’s history.

The narrative of the CPN-M embodies a binary of progression and retardation. A broad aspect of their inclusion in the movement, from their own perspective, underlies a state of incomplete mission though the CPN-M justifies presence of a visible protagonist force. But its own base with the visibly anarchic cadres and militias in their broad characterization as Maoists deconstructs the protagonist image by carrying out extortions and creating unexpected pressure upon the general life. In this sense, the Maoists as insurgents fail to win acknowledgement as an influential actor unlike the claims of some adherents like Pushpa Luitel and Dipak Sapkota,

though the party as a whole sustains the identity of a change agent. Thus, in totality, the CPN-M remains a 'partner in progress' waiting to see its agendas and actions legitimated as one of Nepali state's major entities. *TKP* and *THT* lend enough credence to this party as a force contributory and indispensable during the peace process.

With the regime's narrative we see a clear identification of the key historical antagonist. Description of the conditions of its fall justifies its historical anachronism. But a broad editorial representation does not necessarily emphasize dismissal of the institution of monarchy but provides a critique on the monarch's short-sightedness and regressive posture that invited the fall of his direct rule. The monarch's biggest error thus explained involves his failure to take (or to be taken by) the mainstream political forces and people along. This could equally be understood as his refusal to acknowledge the prominence of democratic agendas due to a cocksureness of getting favor in such condition that people were to some degree disillusioned by political parties. Overall, the monarch's enmity with people's representatives and the disfavor he got from the country's professional groups and general public featured as core causes of his forced withdrawal from active politics.

This study highlights the presence and role of security forces as a separate historical actor. Apart from treating them as integral to the old feudal order adamant in assimilating with the pluralist fold, the papers also discuss their questionable loyalty to the regime and distinct antagonism towards pro-democratic protestors and insurgent Maoists. Such treatment gives them a visible persona. In addition, reports of sporadic atrocities by individual soldiers and officers and involvement of high level officials in controversial acts foreground their separate image. In fact, the atrocities of RNA personnel, high-handedness of APF and corruption in Nepal Police were most visible in such times when security forces led Nepali state under a monarch's tutelage thereby making their negative character distinct during the heightened political crises. It is also seen that despite being a key deterrent to progressive democracy, the security enjoyed institutional leverage to influence and then assimilate into the new post-movement establishment assuming an upper hand in the ensuing days of mainstreaming the Maoists.

This study further unveils a substantive detail of international actors' presence in Nepal in multiple aspects of characters, actions, settings, guiding principles and ideals. Thus we understand different dimensions of their scrutiny into Nepal's affairs.

The most important of these include the American aversion to radical communist resurgence and its implications on the programs of the pro-democratic Alliance. Besides this, China's policy of neutrality, India's ambiguous position, didactic role of the UN and the European community are shown as the key yet relatively unproductive factors of foreign involvement in Nepal. Above all, the narrative on international community highlights at least one instance of how Nepalis could dismiss the international pressure to retain the old establishment during the last days of protests – by turning down the diplomats' inducement to accept the king's proposal for a consensus prime minister. This signifies a thoughtful reality that resistance to or rejection of untimely and inappropriate admonitions of foreign powers is as timely and appropriate for Nepal as accepting their good suggestions.

The role of judiciary might have been thought nominal in popular understanding of the significance of the court and the lawyers in such times as political transitions. This must be why very little is said in popular discourses about judiciary's position during the crucial months following the TPA. The main contribution of this study has also been to supplement substantive discussion about the judiciary's role in the movement's backdrop. The discussion adds to justice Kalyan Shrestha's postulation that the judiciary had "legitimized the causes and concerns of the dissident political community" with its timely intervention to "protect the leaders and other people from the oppressive measures of the government," especially in such historic verdicts as the dissolution of RCCC (13). This, however, is not to insist that the court was a leading movement actor, but that the way it thwarted the regime's unconstitutional moves had positive influence in pro-democratic morale and thus to the pro-movement front. This study equally takes note of the involvement of NBA and law professionals in opposing unconstitutional royal moves and in boosting the confidence of the pro-democratic alliance to achieve their goal of democracy, peace and republic.

Furthermore, this study recounts a clear recognition for Nepali people as an all-powerful neutral actor during the changes of 2006. The narrative of Nepalis describes their spiritual resurrection out of such state of resignation that neither the political parties nor monarchy had uplifted them from poverty and loss of national ethos. The study as well identifies Nepalis in two dimensions. The first notes Nepali citizens as a broad collectivity of the parliamentary parties, professional community, Maoist insurgents and even the monarch. In this respect, the achievements of the



movement are implicitly ascribed even to the king as a Nepali citizen with such an impression that the change is also an opportunity for him to save dignity of the institution of monarchy by rising above 'narrow sectarian interests.'

In the second, the people signify a population of non-partisan neutral mass of protestors such as the 'sea of humanities' that desired change and for this showed a spirit of sacrifice by braving 'bullets and baton charges.' Then Nepalis at large are marked for suffering exploitation, exclusion, bad governance and insurgency. But they symbolize the power to compromise in that they put up with the king anticipating him to fulfill his promise for stability, peace and good governance, and with the parties and Maoists for their pledges for peace and republic. Nepalis equally embody sacrifice for democracy, a third time in the span of six decades. They epitomize forgiveness, especially in the post-April days: for parties despite their unsatisfactory past records, for Maoists despite their past excesses. Finally, they epitomize patience; they can wait for the political forces to reconcile and ensure stability, peace and good governance in spite of a possibility of the relapse of intra-/inter-party conflicts and of untimely compromise with the elements of old establishment. In this way, an important aspect of the rhetoric of April Movement involves glorification of Nepali people as extraordinary human population.

One noticeable aspect of the movement-time editorial coverage concerns a non-vital realization of the role of the civil society. In fact, the civil society is not represented as an independent and influential movement actor. Such exclusion confronts the postulations (especially of Pahadi, Pandey and Sijapati) on the civil society's prominent contribution in the 2006 changes. One reason may be that the SPA and the Maoists pervaded the post-TPA political arena and made regular editorial topics. Thus, apart from scarce references to professionals, doctors, lawyers, professors, and other respectable members of the society to imply the civil society, the papers treated every other actor outside the eight distinct character types either as a part of the Nepali people or of the mass of protestors. The papers may have found no critical exigency – apparently negative or positive – about the civil society to frame a clear critical perspective. However, given the popular emphasis on their significant backing in the 2006 changes, a comprehensive study appears to be of equal relevance to that of other actors. Their unambiguously anti-establishment position as that of the Nepali people and the resultant mass of protestors deserves a larger space than a generic portrayal.

The third dimension of this study's scholarly contribution underlies the depiction of the communicator role of *TKP* and *THT*. The role is perceptible in their representation of the six-month's exigencies, which signifies their persistent presence and scrutiny. As discussed above, the papers recount a history in its many facets including identification of major actors, actions, settings, sanctioning agents, ideals, rhetorical communities, and principal metaphors among others. The eight narratives, eight sets of rhetorical visions and three phases of movement elaborated in the preceding sections underline this aspect of the papers' editorial position.

Furthermore, the manners in which *TKP* and *THT* assume their own involvement define their rhetorical contributions. The main rhetorical dimension thus observed involves their presence as advocates of freedom of expression and the duty to disseminate truth. Implicit to this advocacy is their belief that the pro-democratic side is the side of truth and democracy is an unquestionable form of governance, which is where independent media could best operate. The papers foreground their advocacy and support for democracy through the emphasis of progressiveness in pro-democratic actors despite their perceived weaknesses which is implied less destructive than the royal regime's villainy. More specifically, the papers' common rhetorical stance underlies a host of positions characterized as objectivity with clear sense of involvement, admonition for the main political parties including CPN-M to undergo change, and emphasis on the need of redemption in the Maoist functionaries and the security forces. In addition, the papers reserve a level of regards for national institutions such as the court, the House of Representatives, parliamentary parties as well as the institution of monarchy. This is clearly juxtaposed with the papers' perceived dislike for regressive actors and actions and only conditional acceptance of the international community.

### **Implications for SCT and FTC**

This study has sought to make use of the major theoretical concepts of SCT and FTC in a new context and new corpus of artifacts. This is to say, the scrutiny of editorials has served to comprehend the concepts and discursive tools with newer lights. The study helps distinguish indicators for concepts like *dramatis persona*, plotline, setting, sanctioning agent, symbolic cue and saga. This, I expect, would make future works on FTC more convenient and productive. A critic, for example, can identify *dramatis persona* in an artifact by tracing a personal referent as well as a

descriptor or an attribute related to a character. Each different referent may suggest a different semantic value and thus reflect certain kind of attitude assigned to it by the communicator/text. To cite a case from this study, the generic referent 'King' used for the monarch is found to carry a more neutral and relatively respectful meaning from 'Gyanendra Shah' or 'chairman cum king Gyanendra' which is direct and expressive of the monarch's personal identity as a political actor.

Similarly, a critic can discern two levels of descriptors for a character. The first would take direct qualifiers like the ones used in the editorials, such as 'legitimate' for parliamentary parties, 'autocratic' for the monarchy, 'corrupt' for the royal ministers, 'ill-trained' for the security forces. The second may be inferred from descriptions of the character's actions. For example, the stay order against the government's decision to ban FM newscast or dissolution of RCCC describes SC as an awakened, constitutional and resistant actor. The attempts to impose radical agenda describe the Maoists as 'highhanded.' Understanding these different levels of characterization can help a critic discern clear bifurcation between aspects of villainy and heroism in the same actor(s). So, to a critic, a 'disgruntled' cadre is semantically as powerful as one of his 'compromising' leaders. Majority of the eight narratives discussed above underlie such ambiguities, which is rather a distinctive aspect in the parliamentary parties, CPN-M and the international community.

The present reading as well identifies at least two categories of plotlines. The first, which takes the exact action verbs associated with the character, indicates a clear protagonist or antagonist line. For example, plotlines like defiance, violation, extortion etc. evolve from the verbs defy, violate, extort. The second, which underlies diverse activities, decisions, habits and attitudes of the actors, helps infer certain kind of actions. Majority of plotlines discussed in the study evolve from inferences. For example, corruption in the regime is a composite of a number of 'bad' deeds including financial misappropriation and misuse of public properties. Disruption with reference to the Maoists refers to a number of deviant acts, whereas progression to the Alliance indicates several forward-looking decisions.

The editorials also present three apparent dimensions of settings. First, a setting is perceived as a physical, geographical locale of a drama. Second, it is a location for both implicit and explicit ideological relations. Third, it is a date or an event suggesting a temporal aspect of happenings and characters. For instance, in relation with the 'southern' and 'northern' neighbors, Nepal is seen to stand as a

geographical entity between two large geographical entities, India and China. But in view of the diplomatic attitudes of these neighbors, it bears a geopolitical identity of a country squeezed between two explicitly divided political powers: the southern ambiguously involved, and the northern consistently informed yet neutral about Nepal's internal affairs. A more interesting spatio-cultural polysemy lies in the setting of Kathmandu's Ring Road with reference to the movement. The agitation at different parts of the 27 km. encircling indicates both physical gherao of the hearts of Kathmandu and Lalitpur and the state of the regime's being under increasing political siege. Likewise, a historical event like February takeover or signing of TPA or reinstatement of the House is seen not only as the root or culmination of some other exigencies, but also in view of their historical relevance or irrelevance. This helps the understanding of the main actors and actions in the light of their own contextual significance.

Furthermore, this study unveils for critics two categories of sanctioning agents in the editorials. The first category entails contextual factors and the second takes universally accepted principles. For example, the Alliance's decision to organize four-day protests in April 2006 and the CPN-M's pledge to lend peaceful support are linked to the spirit of the TPA, which is to say the agreement itself functions as a contextual sanctioning agent. Ideals of democracy, sovereignty, peace and rule of law have been the universal sanctions for the agreement and the protests. Similarly, this reading also discovers two types of sagas. Traditional and popular dates form one category while the current high-impact events, which chain out to accumulate more narratives in the passage of time, point to the other. So, an event like the 1990 pro-democracy movement would count among traditional sagas in the rhetoric of pro-democratic movement, whereas the reinstatement of the House on April 24 could be a current high-impact saga having the potential to produce subsequent narratives. The editorials have framed symbolic cues in a similar manner. A signifier like 'Panchayat mindset' falls in a traditional category reminding of a host of historical meanings related to autocracy, prominence of monarchy and absence of multiparty polity. The referent 'jungle,' which signifies the rise, threat and transition of Maoist insurgency in Nepal, forms a type of current symbolic cue.

A critic would also realize that some signifiers show a shifting and multiple semantic values under the parameters of some of the SCT concepts, especially rhetorical vision, sanctioning agent, saga, and in some cases characters, cues and

rhetorical community. For example, a pro-democratic movement is defined as a convergent vision in the TPA. A pro-democratic spirit continues to feature as a sanctioning agent for the Alliance before, during and even after the April protests. When the nineteen-day protests end, the movement or the *Jana Andolan* becomes a principal saga and again a sanctioning agent to guide the future Alliance-Maoist collaboration and suppression of royalist elements. The same applies to the TPA. It functions as a principal saga at the outset and continues to be a sanctioning agent and a symbolic cue for collaboration. Similarly, Maoist ceasefire, reinstatement of the House, House proclamation and signing of the code of conduct underscore identical aspects of polysemy.

Also, the editorials present an interesting instance of semantic diversity in the portrayal of certain real characters such as party leaders. CPN-M Chairman Prachanda, for instance, appears a decisive political actor in his positive overtures to parliamentarians but projects himself an antagonist in the way he often sanctions the disruptive actions of his militias and cadres during the post-April transition. Yet another representative case includes the signifier ‘Thapa clan’ as the alliance of the Home Minister and chiefs of security bodies. This is a cue for a repressive collectivity, a rhetorical community for the vision of protecting monarchy at all costs, and dramatis persona that acts upon that vision. This potential to unveil polysemy in artifacts through the main critical tools registers that SCT and FTC are a productive theory and method to carry out a disinterested yet discourse-rich rhetorical criticism.

This work with SCT and FTC in relation with editorials must at this point reveal some ground to extend the definitions of editorials and editorializing. To go by their etymological essences, both ‘editorializing’ and ‘fantasy theme’ have identical purposes. Editorializing, with its Latin root *edo*, means “to bring forth into the world” (Cumming 478), whereas ‘fantasy’ derives its meaning from the Greek *phantastikos*, which is to ‘present or show to the mind, to make visible.’ In this sense, an editorialist does what a fantasizer does: bring forth opinions into the world and make related issues identifiable and visible to the readers. This is to take the editorials as discourse-rich artifacts beyond what Ansary and Babbali remark them as “mundane and pervasive everyday texts” (213), and to attest to their archival value in the study of historical and political narratives. If one editorial comments on the event of immediate news value, an archive of them provides a stock of narratives and ideals representing the seminal sections of history.

SCT has a professional application in editorializing. The theory shows to the creator and communicator of a public artifact what really draws readers' attention to the message: stories that tell of an intimate experience of the past, or an idea that corresponds to a dream of the future. Such stories or fantasies have the quality to flow to a wider audience, even non-readers of the text, thereby helping the editorialist to create and reach out to a large discourse community that potentially buys and owns the idea. Thus, SCT explains to public communicators the benefit of dramatizing realities through stories, whereas FTC teaches them the skills of identifying the elements of such stories that connect people at different times and places. These stories dwell mainly with actors marked for heroism or villainy, actions either weak or strong, settings proximate or distant in terms of geography, ideology or temporality, and intimate metaphors derived from common parlance or created through a series of communication. The stories contain themes that ensure that identifiable symbols make the dissemination of visions possible. This is to imply that with an awareness of the value of fantasy sharing, and with ability to create and disseminate ideals, an editorialist as a communicator is encouraged to become a studious, reflective and visionary person aware of the emotional needs of the readers and the society at large.

Editorialists as communicators may like to incorporate as many fantasies as possible – to create mental pictures of exigencies, to create a community of believers. Thus, awareness of symbolic convergence and fantasy themes underlies that public communication is not necessarily about writing ornate or condensed style, but being able to represent common narratives and shared visions in an understandable language. Style or artistry is only one category in creating beliefs so far as it is able to communicate fantasy themes to the level of giving sense of sharing and convergence. Writing about personae, plotlines, settings, symbolic cues, rhetorical community, and rhetorical visions suggests a text's complete performativity in the sense of representing a large stock of shared realities. Editorializing as a public act can be more than commenting on everyday events. It is more about making sense of dramas, preserving traditional metaphors and creating new ones. The act of interpreting 'events of significance' could be interpreting stories that speak to the mind of readers and emotionally charge and intellectually challenge the believers.

### **Critic's Reflections**

Reading and applying FTC, I am now in a position to assimilate a few communicative dimensions beyond the editorial discourse. At the very personal level, the present work consolidates my conviction as a teacher that teaching, in addition to involving the selection and sharing of knowledge, demands the commitment and art of helping diverse minds to meet for a common ideal. In most cases, the ideal involves intellectual upgrade, professional training and preparation for meaningful life ahead. Ideal teaching values positive persons and personae, takes care of positive actions and creates teachers' and students' symbolic presence beyond the regular classroom. SCT confirms this aspect of teaching as a 'humanizing' activity and encourages us to believe in the power of sharing intimate stories. I would from now treat the class as a setting for empathizing one another, and that teachers and students are empathetic performers.

SCT teaches to define collegiality as a celebration of individual successes. I understand that an awareness of the value of empathy within a single work-setting naturally leads to the culture of acknowledging and sharing achievements among colleagues, and in more concrete forms, giving ownership and publicizing these achievements for their intellectual uplifts. This is where an individual learns to keep the spirit of a team, which requires respecting individual worldviews as constituents of a larger belief. This is where individuals realize that a team and its members reserve the potential of mutually sanctioning disruptive intents and actions.

I have felt that rhetorical criticism does bring transformation in the critic. It brings to the critic an awareness of the diversity in perspectives, especially the merits of contention in communication. The hero-villain dichotomy that FTC registers is an integral aspect of everyday relationships and everyday communications that define these relationships. Productive communication is about keeping relations intact, creating community, ensuring consensus and acknowledging dissention at the same time. The critic realizes that conflict resolution demands identification and promotion of common grounds through mutually binding actions and negotiations within comfortable settings towards points of agreements. The critic's task in this direction is to explicate the nature of diversity in worldviews and indicate the points of consensus.

A critical method is a powerful magnifying glass or a set of lenses with varying optical powers. But the eyes that see through the lenses, the mind that makes sense of the phenomena and the heart that feels them matter as much or even more.

There are moments of epiphany at the sight of certain signifiers when you read artifacts and try to relate them with your lived realities. The lenses have triggered the epiphany, but it is again the human language that defines the nature of that and any other subsequent experience. In the present work, I have made informed attempts to combine many signifiers into different higher order signifiers. The combination is a purely mental process enabled by moments of reflections and realizations. A rhetorician's task thus moves beyond the artifacts. There are times when you put aside the glasses, especially when your signifiers are waiting for reflections, interconnections and higher abstractions.

And you can choose to wear the glasses many times after your version of criticism has taken shape, in order to reflect the possibility of adding new semantic dimensions to your work. Rhetorical criticism is largely about reflecting on the signifiers more independently, connecting and reconnecting them with your lived realities. My work culminated from moments of such isolated activities and numerous fits of epiphany. But the gifts of SCT and FTC, the magnifying glasses, are there: the narratives, the rhetorical visions and their underlying themes, which seek in best possible ways to revisit the eventful 191days. Because the glasses helped me see through the intricacies of editorial artifacts and made my engagement with the artifacts deep and expansive, I can now say, my engagement with the rhetoric of April Movement has become fairly representative.

### **Limitations and Avenues**

The study has sought to read the editorial artifacts strictly from fantasy theme perspective and discussed elaborately what its standard parameters could best unveil. As is common in any rhetorical study guided by a particular perspective, there is a chance that the critic is conditioned to exclude a number of interesting dimensions from the artifacts under scrutiny. In the present case, the explication of narratives and abstract visions has literally given linguistic and stylistic aspects of the editorials a tertiary significance. Besides, since my principal goal has been to see the aspects of convergence in representing the movement, the study has made comparison of paper-wise representation only an implicit dimension.

However, I am in a position to suggest a few avenues for future studies on the April Movement and editorial discourse. There is a productive opportunity for a researcher to apply a couple of other readings in social movement rhetoric. One such



work would be based on Leyland Griffin's seminal guidelines, which recommend study of a movement through its inception, development and culmination in view of the types and characteristics of rhetors involved in each phase. The fantasy themes that emerge through the scansion of editorials have a potential to signify different rhetorical choices according to the historical phases. In the same way, Herbert Simmons's model of leadership rhetoric comprising rhetorical requirements, problems and strategies could offer an equally illuminating critical perspective to analyze the editorials in view of the leadership of each of the eight character types and their constituent leaders discussed in this study.

Another avenue, which this thesis has purposively excluded, is to carry out a comparative fantasy theme study including the editorials of pro-establishment newspapers, especially the state-run outlet *The Rising Nepal*, for the same 191 days. This could help explore apparently conflicting portrayals of historical personae and competitive rhetorical visions, and perhaps lend different complementary perspective on the prominent actors and narratives related to the six-month time. The present work can also be extended for a broader ethnographic representation. This could include independent opinions of the then editors of *TKP* and *THT* and those of the main political actors represented in the eight narratives discussed in this study. A future critic might as well pick up a project to extend any of the eight narratives to construct one or more comprehensive historical discourses on the roles and representations of some of the relatively under-represented actors. One could, for instance, consider the judiciary, the international community, or security forces, who are also given relatively less prominent space in the editorials studied in this thesis.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The study suggests that editorial artifacts have eclectic discourse potential. Apart from commenting on popular exigencies, editorials contribute to historical knowledge, which is more so in case of movement-time editorials. Editorials represent history in multiple dimensions. A rhetorical perspective like FTC uncovers representative narratives including diversity of discourse categories that consider identification and analysis of characters, actions, settings, guiding principles, binding ideals, intimate metaphors and discourse communities. The study delineates the discursive role of the corporate newspapers, *TKP* and *THT*, in two broad functions in addition to the coverage of political exigencies: appraisal of the major political

narratives and rhetorical visions including that of media institution, and the representation of the April Movement and its aftermath in an implicit rhetorical chronology of resurgence, revitalization and restructuring.

The main rhetorical position of *TKP* and *THT* involves a convergence to the ideals of peace, democracy, rule of law and freedom of expression, and underscores a strong support for the adherents of pluralism, good governance and peaceful living. The political aspect of these newspapers' editorial stance underlies a consistent scrutiny into the exigencies of national significance. With this position they seek to establish a trust on popular sovereignty, internal consolidation and resistance against external interferences. Such critical stance also implies a concern for promoting national ethos that would ensure self-respect through economic uplift, national unity and political convergence, and promote patriotism, sovereignty and good governance in Nepal. Above all, the papers exert sustained emphasis on the inevitability of Nepal's transition from armed-conflict to peace. Their position, therefore, is that of the activist change agents during the eventful times between the Twelve-Point Agreement and the 25- point code of conduct.

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## APPENDIX I

### Editorials on Important Exigencies

Twelve-Point Agreement: *TKP* (24 Nov. 2005)

## Unprecedented

**T**he 12-point agreement reached between the alliance of seven political parties and the Maoist rebels is an unprecedented and remarkable effort to establish a lasting peace. The parliamentary forces and the Maoists have displayed political acumen to resolve the conflict. The agreement respects the multiparty democratic system, a victory of the people over the autocratic regime. The alliance deserves sincere appreciation for being able to convince the Maoists to agree on a peaceful and democratic means to achieve their goals. Similarly, the Maoists have shown immense political maturity and responsibility towards the country. Now, the obvious extension of the agreement is the continuation of the unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists. The extension of ceasefire will certainly instill confidence on the general public, which will create a congenial environment for the people to openly oppose any form of autocracy. Hence, we call upon all the pro-democratic forces, the international community, and all nationalist Nepalis to welcome this agreement, and contribute their level best to implement it successfully to provide a peaceful and prosperous future for our young generation.

The groundbreaking agreement is a strong reply to all those who always declined to recognize political elements within the Maoists. Moreover, it is also a strong message to all political pundits who thought the Maoists and the UML are competing for the same Leftist mass, so they will never compromise with each other. Whatsoever was the view of some self-styled political pundits, we can say that our political leaders have shown extraordinary statesmanship, and have buried the hatchets for the interest of the country. The fatherly figure of the democratic movement Girija Prasad Koirala also deserves kudos, as he is now in a position to restore a complete democracy in the country, as promised by him immediately after the February First royal putsch.

For many, the first concern after the agreement was made public was the reaction of the royal palace. However, we strongly believe that if this agreement holds water, there is no need to worry about the reaction of any reactionary forces. When people are out to choose their own destiny, no gun can hold them for long. Rather, it would be in the interest of the royal palace to capitalize the agreement, which has talked about the end of autocratic monarchy but remained meaningfully silent on republicanism. The silence has not only provided an opportunity to the monarch to remain as a respected ceremonial king, but the same provision can also be used to set a condition, while going to the constituent assembly poll. However, denying such an opportunity will only result in the bloodshed and deaths of many Nepalis. Now when a party that resorted to violence has agreed to lay off the gun, the other gun-totting elements cannot shy away from echoing the same message.

Twelve Point Agreement: *THT* (24 Nov. 2005)

## Come with the wind

The formal announcement on Tuesday of the 12-point memorandum of understanding between the Maoists and the seven-party pro-democracy alliance promises to mark the first major step towards the resolution of the 10-year-old insurgency as well as of the current political and constitutional stalemate. This is a historic development in that the two principal domestic political forces have agreed on a common agenda for a fundamental issue, after a long period of enmity and differences, as the bottom line for the political solution of the crisis. The Maoists and the parties have now put the ball in the royal court, the third key force in Nepali politics. It would therefore depend on the government's response which course the country might take—one of further and more dangerous confrontation or of reconciliation.

Tuesday's announcement probably puts an end to the efforts to reconcile the palace and the political parties in order to isolate the Maoists. In a way, the establishment has forced these two political forces to come closer. Its rigid stance set off a chain of political events and gave rise to a flurry of political consultations, at home and abroad, which seem now to be epitomised in this understanding, probably with the tacit support of democratic nations important to Nepal. The details of the understanding include a commitment to accept the outcome of the constituent assembly, to ensure free and fair elections, to put both the government and Maoist armies under international supervision for the polls, as well as embracing the basic features of a multiparty democracy, such as respect for the rule of law, human rights, and press freedom. Both sides also agreed to 'actively boycott and foil' the forthcoming civic polls.

As for the fate of the monarchy, the Maoists and the political parties seem to keep open the possibility of a 'ceremonial' monarchy as their agreement mentions only 'establishing a total democracy by ending autocratic monarchy'; it does not talk of rooting out the monarchy itself (or in other words, of establishing a republic). The establishment faces tough choices. If it still decides to continue on a collision course, it will run the big risk of further international isolation and of losing much of whatever support it may have at home. As the government's 'terrorism card' has largely failed to take the international community with it, its refusal to take in the right spirit the proposal for constituent assembly as the meeting point of all Nepalis is likely to project it as the major stumbling block to peace and democracy at home and abroad. Then the government would lose its *raison d'être*. It seems the trend towards constituent assembly is now more or less irreversible.

End of Ceasefire: *TKP* (4 Jan. 2006)

## Unfortunate decision

**T**he adamant attitude of the royal government coupled with ego, and the Maoists' lack of confidence to overthrow the government through a peaceful means has unfortunately broken the four-month long unilateral ceasefire. The government is responsible for the breakdown of the ceasefire. The government instead of heeding to appeals of the international community intensified the military offensive against the rebels. Obviously, the belief of the Maoists that peace and justice could be established through violence is always at fault and incongruous with democratic polity. The news about the breakdown of the ceasefire has gripped the entire country in fear and uncertainty. The people have started to foresee incidents of bloodshed and deaths. It is equally unfortunate that media will have to deal with incidents of deaths, torture and detention again.

This was the third truce declared by the rebels since the insurgency started in February 1996. The first one was called off in 2001, while the second ceasefire was jeopardized following the killing of 19 unarmed rebels captured by the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) in Doramba, in 2003. And now the third ceasefire has gone down into the drain because the RNA launched a combing operation in Rolpa and killed a senior Maoist leader. The RNA launched a combing operation in Rolpa and killed a senior Maoist leader. The RNA launched a combing operation in Rolpa and killed a senior Maoist leader.

End of Ceasefire: *THT* (4 Jan. 2006)

## The razor's edge

The Maoists' decision not to extend their four-month-long unilateral ceasefire after it came to an end on Monday threatens to plunge the country into a cycle of heightened violence, while the confrontation between the government and the seven-party alliance promises to take a turn for the worse. In not reciprocating the ceasefire, the government has missed a big opportunity for peace and political settlement, despite widespread calls for a positive response, including those from such friends of Nepal as the UN and the European Union. If New Delhi terms the termination of the ceasefire 'unfortunate', the US dubs it 'very unhelpful', Britain sees it as 'extremely disappointing', and the UN is 'deeply concerned'. The seven-party alliance has put the blame squarely on the government.

On Monday, King Gyanendra, in a joint audience in Taplejung, told a group of people, "Peace will return in the country, rest assured". How, nobody knows — through conflict or through understanding? Few believe there can be a military solution to the Maoist insurgency, and indeed, after these four years of army mobilisation, the Maoists are no less active. What is particularly important to the Nepalis is not peace at any cost, not certainly the peace of the graveyard after causing a further huge loss of lives and property. And today's Nepalis are not ready to accept peace at the cost of democracy, either, as these two bear a close positive correlation. After having lost peace for ten years, the Nepalis do not want to wait for a similar period just on vague assurances. They want results, and soon enough.

The Maoists will obviously focus on foiling the Feb. 8 civic polls, but they have also made it clear that they are ready for a ceasefire at any time if a political conference is held and an interim government formed to hold the constituent assembly elections. The Maoists' ceasefire has achieved one thing at least: it has shown that the government is not ready for peace, except on its terms, or for democracy. Though all signs suggest that things are fast getting out of hand, yet there is some, not much, time left for seeking a negotiated settlement of the present political, constitutional and security crises, provided those in power realise that they cannot impose their will, and that they will eventually have to agree to a comprehensive democratic solution, if they want to salvage any role for themselves in the future. Any government or deal that does not fully recognise the people's sovereign right to decide what is good for them cannot be expected to last long.

February One: TKP (1 Feb 2006)

## February One

**A**bsolute power corrupts absolutely, wrote Lord Acton about a century ago. King Gyanendra's one year of absolute rule has added to this dictum: Absolute power also fails absolutely. Wednesday marks the first anniversary of the king's absolute rule. We feel sorry for the monarch that he does not have a single reason to celebrate this anniversary. On February 1, 2005, the king had vowed to establish peace, good governance and fiscal discipline and had also promised to eliminate corruption. In each of these areas — and in many others — the king has failed miserably. The Maoist insurgency has only become emboldened and has come right into the heart of the capital. Good governance has become more elusive than ever before. Fiscal discipline became a laughing stock after the monarch himself failed to maintain transparency over a billion rupees spent on an African Safari, other royal visits, royal marriages and royal largesse. Nepal has ascended in *Transparency International's* list of the most corrupt countries after the royal takeover. Municipal polls, in which the king has staked all, have become a farce. What is the meaning of an election in which the political leaders are put in jail and the so-called candidates are holed up in barracks?

The king has not only lost his credibility at home and abroad but everyone is asking in frustration: What's wrong with the king? If anything, his February One gamble has only proven suicidal for the monarchy. The king has already made two blunders after February One. First, he did not reciprocate the ceasefire announced by the rebels on September 2 last year. Second, he didn't acknowledge the 12-point understanding reached between the seven-party alliance and the rebels. Both of these had provided a window of opportunity for peace. Both had come with a chance of life for many. During the four-month long unilateral ceasefire, only 103 people were killed, whereas four months preceding the ceasefire, 702 had lost their lives. Saving citizens' lives should be the state's prime responsibility. For a monarch who is overtly religious and has visited almost all the temples of any repute inside the country, it should be his top priority. Unfortunately, his political stance has been confrontational which will only lead to more bloodshed.

No doubt the king has gone too far. But we still believe that he can make amends to save monarchy and the country from further anarchy. If he wants to roll back Feb One and make peace with his people, today is the best day to do so. People can forgive him assuming it to be a case of good-intentions-gone-wrong. But if he wants to go ahead with his roadmap, as many of his cronies would want him to, we have only one question to ask: How many monarchies have won a war with their own people?

February One: *THT* (2 Feb. 2006)

## Same time, last year

Contrary to expectations in some quarters of some dramatic new move, King Gyanendra in his address to the nation yesterday gave a message, loud and clear, that he is determined to continue on the road map he had laid out on February 1 last year. Instead of rethinking the February 8 civic polls in view of the shortage of candidates and the likely low voter turnout triggered by the active boycott by the political parties and the Maoists, the King urged the people to vote in large numbers, reiterating his promise that by April next year the parliamentary polls will also be held. On the occasion of the completion of one year of his stewardship of the Council of Ministers, the King repeated his government's policy and programmes and defended his direct rule.

The kind of importance he gave to the mainstream political parties could be inferred from the fact that he did not even mention the phrase 'political parties', a vital part of the polity under the 1990 Constitution, though he was critical of their role. The royal address also claimed to have confined the Maoist activity to 'sporadic criminal activity'. But few will agree with this view. As if armed with foreknowledge and aiming to disprove this claim, the Maoists mounted a massive midnight attack in Tansen (Palpa) on Tuesday, killing a number of security personnel and sending more missing, including the CDO, besides destroying several government offices. With this, the claim of a considerable improvement in the security situation has become a major casualty.

Particularly worrying is the government's assessment of the situation that does not come close to reality. And from this generous assessment has proceeded a continuation of a course of action that can only be expected to lead to more conflict and bloodshed, with uncertain but disastrous consequences for the country. The government has set great store by an election which already looks farcical in the eyes of most people, and which may prove the more so as the stepped-up Maoist attacks are likely to scare away many of even those who might otherwise vote. What good can the Nepali people expect from such an exercise, which the government intends to replicate at the national level in the name of the parliamentary election next year? Unless a realisation dawns on the powers-that-be that there is no military solution to the Maoist insurgency and that the only alternative left for a peaceful and democratic Nepal is a negotiated settlement of all political and constitutional disputes, the country's downward slide cannot be halted.

Municipal Polls: *TKP* (9 Feb. 2006)

## Poor show

**P**oor royal government! Despite wasting million of rupees, it couldn't save its election show from being a total failure and a farce. The royal regime used all its resources, muscle power and strength just to prove to the world that people in Nepal want to elect their leaders under active monarchy. But it failed miserably. The turnout in the municipal elections showed that the people were quite aware of the royal regime's tactics to earn legitimacy through forceful elections. It was a total failure of those day dreamers who contemplated to establish guided democracy through the military-imposed elections. The Nepali people have flatly rejected the king's executive rule. In such a situation, a rational and logical person would concede the defeat gracefully in sportsmen's spirit. Poor us! We have not been lucky to have a statesman of that stature.

We don't force anyone to believe in us and for the elections a failure. Just ponder on some statistics, and they speak themselves. The royal regime announced elections for 4146 positions in 58 municipalities of 63 districts. First of all, there were no nomination forms filled in for 2551 positions. In 1277 positions, the candidates have been elected unopposed. On Wednesday the elections were held for just 618 positions. Among the 1682 candidates contesting, many announced their withdrawal through media as they couldn't do so within the stipulated period because of various pressures. Despite all efforts by the royal regime, it could hardly draw 15-20 percent voters to polling stations. We believe even this number is not natural because many government officials, security personnel and their family members were forced into the polling booths. For the civil servants the chief secretary had issued a strict circular. For the security personnel, it had come from much higher up.

The royal regime can still be defiant and claim three times higher polling than the actual figure. It is not impossible. In most booths there weren't representatives of the candidates. Nor are they going to utter a word against the royal regime. However, the government (not Election Commission because it has been overtly overshadowed by the royal regime) should be given the benefit of doubts and should be believed that they would come up with the "real" results. If the royal regime dares publicize the actual figures of polling, it should also show the sincerity to cancel the elections and defer it until the current political conflict is resolved. We hope the royal regime comes to its sense by the turnout in the elections, and gives up its stubborn attitude.



Municipal Polls: *THT* (10 Feb. 2006)

## On the murky pond

Now both the government and the opposition are claiming a success. According to Home Minister Kamal Thapa, the municipal election was 'successfully' held in a 'peaceful, free and fair manner', and he went on to say that compared with the previous elections, this election has been 'free of controversy'. On the contrary, the seven-party opposition alliance has concluded that the election has proved a 'failure', because the people have rejected it. On their part, the Maoists, calling off their week-long nationwide bandh after four days, claimed that their and other political forces' active boycott has 'completely destroyed the civic election'.

The overall voter turnout has come out to be record low, as expected; in the first and second municipal elections, held in 2049 BS and 2054 BS, voter turnout hovered at around 60 per cent. This time around, according to the data supplied by the Election Commission, it stood at about 20 per cent. But the opposition contests even this claim by saying that less than five per cent of the electorate actually cast vote. Dwelling on this dispute is not important. The central issue is what this controversial exercise has achieved. Certainly, it will not lead to peace. Moreover, it will be stretching one's imagination to expect democracy of an exercise rejected by the great majority of the people, including the mainstream political parties, which commanded more than 95 per cent seats in the dissolved House of Representatives.

Even more important, it is sure to aggravate the conflict between the government the parties and between the former and the Maoists. In an election in which more than 50 per cent of the seats attracted no candidates, and candidates for many seats were elected unopposed, and even in the remainder the number and quality of participation and the widely alleged intervention of the administration have robbed the whole exercise of domestic and international credibility and legitimacy. If the US, for example, has described the poll called by the King as a 'hollow attempt to legitimize his power', Japan has deplored the exercise because it was 'held without a broad support of the people of Nepal'. Given this reality of the poll even in urban areas, which are supposed to have much less Maoist influence than the countryside does, it is not hard to predict what kind of election this government will hold for the village bodies and the national parliament. Besides, given all the circumstances of this election, it is a matter of mere conjecture how the elected office-bearers will be able to discharge their duties effectively.



Dissolution of the Royal Commission: *TKP* (16 Feb. 2006)

## Who's responsible?

**T**he Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC) formed to subdue critics of royal coup and to reverse the political course of the country has now become a thing of the past. The king had constituted the royal anti-corruption body 17 days after the February One coup that nullified the most significant principles of the rule of law embedded in the 1990 Constitution. Almost a year later, the Supreme Court delivered the verdict that sealed the fate of the royal commission permanently. The credit must go to the apex court that stood for the fundamentals of the country's constitution. In fact, the royal order had flouted the fundamental principles of the law. It neither distinguished between the investigating and prosecuting bodies, nor did it separate them from the adjudicating authority. Despite this, the king had given it unlimited powers.

The formation of RCCC was designed to paralyze the existing bodies responsible for investigation into corruption—Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) and Special Court (SC) formed to consider the CIAA's prosecutions. The king, otherwise, would have empowered the CIAA to deal with the corruption-related cases. However, in the course of RCCC's existence, it tortured and intimidated several civil servants, politicians and contractors in the name of fighting corruption. Secretary Dinesh Chandra Pyakurel committed suicide out of humiliation. Its unfair decision traumatized Mina Nirouala, wife of Tika Dutta Nirouala, who was convicted on corruption charges in Melamchi Drinking Water Project. It ostracized and even stigmatized many innocent civil servants loyal to democracy. Former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his cabinet colleague Prakash Man Singh went through almost a year-long torture, though the Asian Development Bank had ruled out any irregularities while awarding the Melamchi drinking water project.

The motive leading to formation of the RCCC was apparently a political one. But who is responsible for the atrocities meted out to innocent civil servants, contractors and the politicians? How will the victims get justice? Here, it does not mean that the SC verdict has liberated the corrupt politicians, civil servants and contractors. But the formation and functioning of the RCCC was wrong. The CIAA enjoys the constitutional right to investigate cases of corruption. The court should not let any regime constitute such an unconstitutional body to assassinate characters of some prominent persons. And the acts of the RCCC amount to crime against humanity as they violated individual freedom and unleashed atrocities against the innocent people. The victims of RCCC acts deserve justice and must be duly compensated for the atrocities meted out to them.

Dissolution of the Royal Commission: *THT* (14 Feb. 2006)

## Righting a wrong

Yesterday's dissolution of the exceptionally controversial Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC) constitutes an important milestone in an otherwise bleak political highway, as it has set right a major constitutional wrong by the executive. In a landmark verdict, the Supreme Court pronounced that RCCC had been formed in contravention of the 1990 Constitution. "The King has no authority to form such a commission under Article 127", said the five-member bench, citing Articles 83 (3), 84, 85, 88 (3), 89, 105 (7) and 127. It also annulled all the activities of RCCC, including the corruption case against incarcerated former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. Consequently, all detainees now become automatically free. The verdict does not, however, mean they are necessarily innocent.

King Gyanendra had formed RCCC soon after his takeover on February 1 last year under his emergency orders citing Article 115(7), and after the lifting of the emergency, he transferred its formation to Article 127. The court held that a commission cannot be formed under either Article. People are likely to differ over the implications of the verdict. Some may interpret it as a political setback for the regime, while others may see in it a possible political thaw. Undoubtedly, however, the RCCC disbandment poses moral questions for those who were responsible for its creation. The verdict has also set a precedent that any action of the monarch is subject to a test of constitutionality in the Supreme Court. Also vitally important is its pronouncement that Article 127 does not offer unlimited powers, and that orders under it which need to be issued on proper recommendation cannot, however, claim the same authority and validity as the Constitution. The court also declared that the state and sovereign powers vested in the Nepali people are beyond dispute.

RCCC had grievously encroached on the jurisdiction of the constitutionally formed Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority, and the Special Court, set up for deciding on corruption cases. It may be premature to predict that the verdict holds favourable political implications for democracy. But by this decision the apex court has also retrieved some of its lost glory as it has faced serious allegations, including those from the Nepal Bar Association, that it has fallen short of its constitutional role. Indeed, the court has been helpless to prevent or reverse the derailment of the Constitution, and its failure to decide on a review petition for the restoration of the House of Representatives for some three and a half years is a case in point. In fact, the judiciary could play a highly important role even in breaking the political and constitutional deadlock in the country.

Second SPA-Maoist Understanding: *TKP* (20 Mar. 2006)

## Reinforcing move

**T**he Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) and Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) have entered into the 'second' understanding that reiterates and reinforces the first 12-point agreement reached between them on 22 November 2005. Though the latest understanding is not a step forward from the first one, it is significant because it has addressed the rough edges developed while implementing the 12-point pact in the last four months. The killing of political cadres and widespread violence had made the alliance anxious about the Maoist commitment to the peaceful movement. On the other hand, the Maoists were worried that the parties would reconcile with the king and lend support for a military solution to the Maoist insurgency. However, the second understanding is still half-baked because the basic question on the route to the 'agreed' constituent assembly elections has remained unresolved.

The route to the elections to the constituent assembly indeed bears the crux of the matter. The seven parties wish to resolve the Maoist insurgency by restoring the parliament and forming a powerful interim government that could hold dialogue with the Maoists and subsequently conduct the elections to the constituent assembly. The Maoists want to form an interim government through a national conference of democratic forces and then move towards the constituent assembly elections. The way suggested by the parties still provides ample opportunity to the monarch to secure his constitutional role, which the Maoists are finding difficult to accommodate. On the other hand, the Maoists' suggested-route would pave a violent way to topple the royal regime. The political parties are still not confident that the Maoists' People Liberation Army could be easily converted into national army, if the latter's strategy turns successful.

We believe the parties' strategy would not yield a satisfactory result until the king realizes that impeding the restoration of parliament might cost him his throne. If the king opts to continue his adamant posture, the parties will be forced to swallow the Maoist pill. However, unless the Maoists convince the people that they are all for peaceful movement to achieve multiparty democratic system (democratic republic), it would be suicidal for the parties and the country. And they have to prove their stance by deeds and not by words. The calling off the blockade by the Maoists from 20 March is a welcoming act. Now the Maoists need to announce unilateral ceasefire that would help them acquire political stature and make people believe that they are serious about renouncing violence. Such a move would make them more credible than the unconstitutional regime that has been deceiving people in the name of protecting democracy.

Second SPA-Maoist Understanding: *THT* (21 Mar. 2006)

## Dissent is democracy

There has been a general sense of relief with the withdrawal, after six days, of the Maoists' indefinite *chakkajam* (a halt to vehicular traffic) and blockade of district headquarters and the Kathmandu Valley. This decision follows a second understanding between the seven-party alliance and the Maoists, which was made public separately on Sunday. Even the capital had started feeling the pinch, including the shortage of petroleum products, apart from the wider impact of the blockade. The second understanding aims at strengthening the 12-point first one, signed last November. The Maoists responded positively to the alliance's appeal for support to its 'peaceful protest programme', including the four-day national strike (April 6-9). However, the rebels are likely to keep up the pressure through other means.

Despite tremendous pressure from certain quarters, including the US, on them to distance themselves from the Maoists, the political parties have expressed commitment to the 12-point understanding, though, admittedly, they could not agree to issue a joint statement. Under the circumstances, it was out of the question for them to accept the more radical Maoist proposal of common slogan, common front, and common programme. For their part, the parties are not in a position to trust the establishment, as they feel they have been let down more than once. They thus reckon that breaking off with the Maoists would carry greater risks. The parties must also have thought that they have lost much by acting on the advice of the Kathmandu-based high-voltage diplomats, for example, by calling off the agitation more than once on 'positive' signals relayed by them.

The Maoists and the seven parties have agreed on constituent assembly as the bottom line for the resolution of the national crisis. They still differ over the procedure, but which they have agreed to bridge the gap through discussions. The protests against the establishment will continue and probably become stronger in days to come. The least wise act on the government's part would be to try to foil the parties' upcoming protests, as it did last time by imposing a daytime curfew. Such a move would tend to vindicate the Maoists and weaken the government's professions of democracy. It will not alleviate its difficulties. Just on the suspicion or 'reliable information' that there may be infiltration, the government cannot pre-empt the parties' programmes. The only sane course for it would be to take a credible initiative to open a dialogue with both the parties and Maoists.

Beginning of the Movement: *TKP* (7 Apr. 2006)

## Curfew state

It is fathomable that the power usurped by staging coup would require frequent impositions of curfews to sustain it. The failure of the king's over-ambitious and unconstitutional move to seize power is reflected in the action of the soldiers. The royal regime has taken refuge under the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) after it lost all moral, ideological, and traditional support bases. Although deserted by the international community, challenged by the Supreme Court, and rejected by the general public, the king is unrelenting. He has shown a clear intention of clinging onto the power and squandering national resources by going to any length, no matter if it turns the country into a curfew state.

While the state media are exploited blatantly to broadcast and print the king's quotes pontificating people's rights and democracy a zillion times, the royal regime is busy gagging the freedom of speech by announcing ban on assemblies and demonstrations, arresting political leaders, clamping down on peaceful protests, and imposing curfews. It has already called on people out of the valley to refrain from visiting the capital, and it won't be a surprise if it disconnects all telephone lines as it did in the past. Whatever the royal regime does, it is not going to sustain for long. Even the handful of businessmen, who were supporting the February coup, are now opposing the regime.

The king's stubbornness to go alone has only empowered the Maoists. Unfortunately, the general public is now more and more confused. The autocratic move has confused those who opposed violence and backed ceremonial monarchy. The situation has emerged as such that backing RNA is to support the autocratic monarchy, which most Nepalis have started to despise. People also deplore the deaths of helpless Nepalis who are either in the security forces or with the Maoists. It is time the international community played a positive role in resolving the conflict in Nepal. We hope the royal regime opens its eyes and realizes that it is fighting a losing war. In recent months, the conflict has escalated to the extent that the country is virtually in a state of disarray. No responsible force would neglect it and play Nero, as if nothing has happened. It is deplorable on part of the government to show an ostrich-like attitude and impose curfews to repress freedom of speech.

Beginning of the Movement: *THT* (7 Apr. 2006)

## Fire in the lake

The deteriorating human rights situation in the country is highlighted by UN secretary-general Kofi Annan in a statement on April 6, the first day of the four-day general strike announced by the seven-party alliance. Noting with concern the ban imposed on protests in the Kathmandu Valley and arrests of a large number of government opponents, the UN chief has made it clear that "security considerations should not be the basis for denying citizens their right to peaceful protest". He has added with a note of despair that it is a "right for which virtually all avenues seem to be closing." Annan, troubled by the developing confrontation, has questioned the argument of 'security considerations' for crackdown on dissent by pointing out that the Maoists have suspended military activity in the Kathmandu Valley.

The UN chief appealed to all sides to the conflict to 'work towards ending the conflict through a reciprocal ceasefire agreement'. Similarly, Louise Arbour, UN high commissioner for human rights, has rued the lack of a 'sustained peace process' to end the 10-year conflict in Nepal in a report she presented at Geneva, and noted the intensification of the conflict beginning with 2006. These reflect the concerns of those who wish Nepal well. At the same time, the American embassy, in a April 5 statement, has said that the dialogue between the King and the political parties — a line which the US has stressed — 'is not possible in a climate in which the freedoms of speech and assembly are suppressed'.

In such a context, it is difficult for the government to drum up wide international support. As regards the above US statement, it remains to be seen how the US will exercise its tremendous clout in Nepal, beyond general statements, in favour of a political settlement of the problems facing the country. On its part, the government is mixing up the issues of Maoist insurgency and restoration of democracy. In the name of suppressing the Maoists, it cannot be excused for suspending democratic rights and marginalising the mainstream political parties on the strength of the gun. The pursuit of military means has succeeded in neither keeping the Maoist insurgency from spreading and gaining in strength nor stopping the political parties from mustering wider support. The present aggressive course of the government is certain to escalate conflict and deepen instability further. Sooner or later, the government will have to agree to a political solution. But the danger of delayed action is that then the situation may have reached a point of no return.

King's April 21 Address and the International Community: *TKP* (24 Apr. 2006)**Int'l Community**

Currently, Nepal stands at a crossroads. On the right side of it is a new Nepal where people are fully sovereign; insurgency is resolved and the Maoists join the political mainstream; the state is restructured to accommodate the disfranchised populace; and the society makes a peaceful transition towards prosperity. On the wrong side of it is the status quo, where the fundamental issue of sovereignty remains unresolved; the Maoist insurgency continues; state, under the direct control of the king, remains unitary and unwilling to address the issue of widespread exclusion. As Nepal has entered the final stage of the labor pain, the international community, unfortunately, seems to be supportive of the status quo. The international community's euphoric reaction to Friday's royal address is ludicrous, to say the least. It also shows how shallow is their reading of Nepali history and how far removed they are from the present ground reality. The foreign envoys' suggestion to the parties to break with the rebels and to take the royal offer is fraught with two serious problems.

First, it does not address the Maoist insurgency, the main problem of the day. Breaking with the Maoists at this point in time and rejecting their legitimate demand for a constituent assembly means more bloodshed and more chaos for several years to come. Second, it denies the Nepali people their sovereign rights to decide --- through peaceful means --- the future of monarchy. Between three to four million people, who have already hit the streets nationwide, demanding the election to the constituent assembly, didn't suddenly wake up one fine morning and said that they wanted to do away with the monarchy. These people have a painful memory of thier history where monarchy has played, time and again, with Nepali people's democratic aspirations. King Tribhuvan failed to live up to his promise of constituent assembly elections in the 1950s. Then, King Mahendra dismissed the first democratically elected government in December 1960. King Birendra gave in to the demands of democracy only after dozens of Nepalis shed blood in 1990. Again in 2004, King Gyanendra sacked the elected government and in 2005 seized absolute power, jailed the political leaders and gagged the press.

Now the people want to break away with this history, of which the international community does not really know. That is why they are happy with the king's announcement of transfer of executive power and want the parties to grab the prime ministerial post offered by him. Sher Bahadur Deuba was reinstated to the post of prime minister in 2004 by the king transferring the so-called executive power. What happened after a year? Moreover, parties were criticized in the past for being power-hungry, for running after the chair. Now, when they are saying it's not an issue of becoming a prime minister but a question of resolving the country's burning problems, they are being pressurized to take king's offer of prime minister.

The most unfortunate failure of the international community has been their inability to see the courage and democratic aspirations of the Nepali people. This is a country marred by a violent insurgency. Yet during the last two weeks, millions of Nepalis have come to the street rejecting violence. They have braved bullets, baton charges and tear gas shells but have refrained from violence. What is the message of the international community to these peaceful protestors? Are they going to say, "No you can't meet your demands through peaceful protests?" Are they going to say, as the Maoists advocate, that armed revolution is the only answer to the Nepali state's violence? Indian foreign secretary Shyam Saran tried to do a damage control in New Delhi the other day in a hurriedly called press conference saying that India would respect the Nepali people's decision. If the rest of the countries do not review their stance immediately, and continue to dishonor one of the most peaceful and colossal uprisings in modern history, they will soon find themselves on the wrong side of Nepali history.

King's April 21 Address and the International Community: *THT* (24 Apr. 2006)

## Ameliorative approach

It was certainly not a good sight to see some of the important Kathmandu-based diplomats trooping to the site of the seven-party meeting on Saturday to persuade the alliance leaders to accept the King's call and recommend a name for the prime minister. Several countries important to Nepal — such as India, the US, the EU, which consists of 25 countries — as well as UN secretary general Kofi Annan have hailed the King's proclamation that he is instantly returning executive power to the people as provided for under Article 35 of the 1990 Constitution. But, for the leaders of the alliance, as well as for the teeming masses chanting slogans demanding constituent assembly, or even a republic straightaway, the King's offer was just a ploy. Even Sher Bahadur Deuba, who had become prime minister under Article 127, with the King's express announcement that his government would enjoy executive power under Article 35, spurned the royal offer, citing his own unceremonious dismissal.

Whatever their intentions, the stance of these countries is out of sync with the mood and aspirations of the people and on whom they appear to be imposing their prescriptions. But this time around, the alliance has had to rebuff their advice. Since the palace and the parties moved on a collision course, these countries have been calling for a reconciliation between them, to deal with the Maoists better. But this seems to be an unrealistic goal as long as the palace does not come round to the idea of holding the constituent assembly elections, the common ground that now upholds the 12-point understanding between the alliance and the Maoists. Now, one may like it or not, constituent assembly has become the demand of the streets and of the Nepalis in general.

The Maoists have now emerged as a vital political force, as the general people and the mainstream parties have made common cause with their agenda of constituent assembly. The key issue, then, is how to bring the Maoists into the democratic mainstream and democratise those now in power. The need of the hour is, therefore, to move in that direction. The alliance leaders have been saying that they can take care of the Maoists in this regard. The rebels, too, have publicly said that they are ready to accept the verdict of the constituent assembly. Even at this hour, the Maoists just might consider agreeing to the retention of a 'ceremonial' monarchy. Therein lies the solution to the present crisis. Any attempt to isolate the parties, including the Maoists, or support the wrong-headed pursuit of military means can only pave the road to hell. Those who are truly democrats should not be afraid of any democratic exercise, be it a referendum or a constituent assembly. Strangely though, those in power and some democratic countries are suggesting a denial of this right to the Nepali people.



Restoration of the House: *TKP* (26 Apr. 2006)

## Martyrs' rights

**A**t least 16 protestors lost their lives in a nineteen-day long nationwide people's movement that finally reinstated the 'dissolved' parliament. Nine protestors are still missing and over five thousand injured in the skirmishes between the security forces and the protestors are being treated in country's different hospitals. Most of the protesters who died were the bread-earners in their families. The injured are ordinary Nepalis who cannot even afford proper treatment. Many of them have sustained serious head injuries, lost eyesight, broken legs and hips. A few among the dead are yet to be identified and there were reports that the security forces took away some of the dead bodies. For instance, a twelve-year old boy of Malekhu was presumed beaten to death. Several protestors, who fought dauntlessly for their rights for almost three weeks, have disappeared from the sights of other protestors.

No matter how the government formed after the revival of parliament initiates the legal action against the security personnel involved in the firing on the unarmed protestors, the apparent question is when will the government compensate the loss of lives? The widows and the parents of those killed and injured anticipate some kind of monetary arrangement. The Seven Party Alliance (SPA) has made it public that they would pay one million Rupees each to the martyrs and two hundred thousand Rupees to the injured. But will such payment compensate? Also, the Maoists, too, have their martyrs. They, too, will soon claim compensations. So the SPA should work out method of compensating the martyrs and treating the injured. The SPA must take the decision in such a way that it does not ignite any differences with the Maoist rebels.

There must be a mechanism, which will recognize the due rights of the martyrs whosoever he or she is. The government could raise a revolving fund especially for the martyrs of *Loktranta*. The state can provide regular income to their families as well as jobs for the injured.

The royal regime was responsible for the disappearances. The security forces must make the detainees public if they have cremated any dead ones. They can no longer remain a hostile force. Until a report on the agitation is brought out, the people have nothing to say. But the people expect that the SPA will make the moves that will help restore peace and the dignity of the people. The most important step at this juncture is to recognize the martyrs and treat the injured properly. Besides, it is the children of the martyrs and the injured who need better education and upbringing. The SPA cannot ignore the families of martyrs as the successive governments formed after the 1990 people's movement did.

Restoration of the House: *THT* (26 Apr. 2006)

## New dawn

Monday night's proclamation by which King Gyanendra has accepted the roadmap of the seven political parties that culminates in constituent assembly (CA), and restored the House of Representatives, dissolved more than four years ago, once again displays the unconquerable power of the people. Undoubtedly, the people have had to fight hard for nearly four years to win back their freedoms and sovereign powers even under the 1990 Constitution. In the process, though, they have won much more. The royal acceptance of the alliance's roadmap means that the Nepalis will now carve out their own destiny, with the 1990 Constitution working as an interim arrangement. The sea of humanity that swarmed the streets for 19 days on end calling for CA or downright republic compelled the King to make his proclamation. There was no other better saluting act for him. For this success, those defying the curfews and braving the bullets, deserve the highest honour a grateful nation can bestow. But this sense of gratitude has to be expressed in deeds to the families of those martyred to democracy and maimed or seriously injured in this noble fight. Therefore, those taking power shortly must not do a repeat of the ingratitude shown after the 1990 Jana Andolan to the workers and sons and daughters of Nepal.

The latest proclamation rendered redundant the royal offer of premiership made to the parties three days earlier, reflecting the swiftness with which events overtook the calculations of many, including important foreign powers, which had initially backed the first royal move by urging the alliance to take the bait. This is a victory for all Nepalis, as it promises to resolve, once and for all, the issue of CA that has been hanging fire for the past 55 years, leading to unnecessary political and constitutional crises about the sources of state powers. But the restoration of the Lower House is just the first giant step towards reaching the goal of holding the assembly polls. Given the deep distrust among the major domestic political players, the road ahead is far from smooth. The seven-party alliance is wedded to the 12-point understanding with the Maoists, setting CA as their common ground.

Indeed, the proclamation, which recognises the people as being the sole source of all state authority and the repository of the sovereignty, has, albeit belatedly, referred to the spirit of the current Jana Andolan and the alliance roadmap as the ultimate guide to chalk out the future course of Nepali history. The alliance, unanimously choosing Nepali Congress president as their nominee for Prime Minister, has announced that it will form an all-party government, leading up to CA through talks with the Maoists. It has also decided to revoke all decisions and appointments made since October 4, 2002, appoint a commission to investigate cases of excessive use of force against the pro-democracy protesters and take action against the guilty. But the Maoists, dubbing the proclamation as a 'deception and conspiracy' to 'protect' the monarchy and describing the alliance's acceptance of it as a 'big historical mistake', have, however, agreed to a strings-free constituent assembly. To push for that by exerting pressure, the Maoists have said that they will keep the pot of 'peaceful *Jana Andolan*' boiling until that goal is achieved.

All this stresses the need for both the alliance and the rebels to engage in constant consultation and sufficient confidence-building measures. If need be, the good offices of such credible agencies as the United Nations can be used to ensure a fair deal for all, including the holding of a free and fair vote and management of the eventual surrender of weapons by the Maoists. All sides to the conflict, including the palace, should rise above their narrow sectarian interests to usher in a climate of trust to negotiate vigorously through the tortuous path towards constituent assembly and beyond, heralding a new dawn of total democracy, peace, prosperity and above all the unity and uniqueness of the nation.

Significantly absent from the royal proclamation was the mention of monarchy itself, of whatever variety, while protection of multiparty democracy, permanent peace, national unity and prosperity have been emphasised. This may be interpreted to mean that the King may have decided to leave the settlement of the issue of monarchy to the verdict of the people themselves. Indeed, by definition, CA must be unconditional, because the people are the supreme judge. Though Maoist misgivings cannot be brushed aside in toto, judging from the past experiences, the pressing need is still there to move ahead to prepare the ground for the sovereign people of Nepal to write their own Constitution and choose how they want to run their country and their lives.

House Proclamation: *TKP* (19 May 2006)

## Sovereign House

**T**his historic day vindicates that the people power reigns supreme. We bow to the House of Representatives that has proclaimed itself sovereign and supreme body on this day. May 18, 2006 will be remembered in Nepal as a historic day because the rights snatched from the king on April 24, 2006 have been institutionalized and people have become sovereign. All those who risked their lives, property, and careers to restore democracy must have felt a sense of accomplishment. But, the mission as a whole has not been accomplished yet. There are more complicated issues such as the management of the arms, bringing insurgents into the mainstream, elections to the Constituent Assembly, and rehabilitation of the displaced. The road ahead is more arduous. It demands responsible behavior on the part of the people and their representatives.

At the moment, we are optimistic. The country is onto the right track of healing the wounds of insurgency. It is going to emerge soon as a harmonious, peaceful, democratic and fast-developing country. Despite the political confusion, delays and violent expression of ire by the people, coming up with the decision of such a profound impact on the populace in less than a month is praiseworthy. The clipping of the wings of the king was very much essential and quite tricky. The decision of choosing the heir to the throne by the parliament will not only make the would-be king disciplined, but he will also be obliged to the people and the parliament. From now onwards, a king would sit on the throne on the basis of people's faith and belief on him rather than being the first son of the royal family. The decisions to scrap Royal Council, taxes on the income of the royal family, scrapping of the royal secretariat and other decisions have certainly minimized the threat of yet another coup from the king. However, all these decisions can be implemented only if the people remain alert and be ready to come to the street if anything untoward happens.

Nepal government and Nepal Army appear much more fresh, liberated and free from royal burden. The decision to de-link the army from the palace by removing the post of Supreme Commander-in-Chief, scrapping off the royal military secretariat, and mobilization of army and appointment of Chief of Army Staff by the cabinet are encouraging. All the Nepalis who love the country are solidly behind these decisions of the government and the House of the Representatives. However, the role of the civil society, media and other watchdog organizations has further heightened. They have to monitor the implementation of the decisions closely, and blow the whistle anytime they see the government or the House going off the track. If all balancing powers of the society work in unison, nothing can hinder our aspirations to achieve the ultimate goal of bringing a lasting peace and attaining economic progress in the days ahead.

House Proclamation: *THT* (19 May 2006)

## Hail to the people

The House of Representatives' Declaration 2006 — in sync with the popular aspirations — is a turning point in the history of Nepal. By underscoring the significance of the sovereign people's power, the declaration deals a decisive blow to the immense powers and privileges enjoyed by the 237-year-old institution of monarchy. With it comes to an end the Shah dynasty as the custodian of the nation's sovereign power and the centuries of legacy it had embodied. Country's sovereignty and executive authority is now acknowledged to rest irrevocably with the people and the parliament is to exercise supreme authority from now onwards. His Majesty's Government has been rechristened as Nepal Government, and the Royal Nepalese Army as Nepal Army. Now transformed into a secular state, Nepal is no more the world's only Hindu kingdom. Changes over the national anthem are also on the cards. The king's executive authority is a thing of the past. Like ordinary citizens his actions can be questioned in the House and court of law, and his income and private property too have been brought under the purview of taxation. The parliament keeps with it the authority to enact the law with regard to royal succession. The monarch is no more the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the army. He cannot even convene the session of parliament. Instead the House will be convened by the prime minister and terminated by the Speaker on his recommendation. The largely discredited Raj Parishad and the National Defence Council stand scrapped with the parliament and the government assuming their role respectively.

Indeed the dawn of a new era has come at a heavy price. The nation is indebted not only to the sacrifices of those 21 precious lives lost during the *Jana Andolan* but also to hundreds of protesters who fearlessly battled with brickbats and bullets during the recent mega movement. But the newfound freedom, undoubtedly, comes with new responsibilities and unless the political power is exercised exclusively in the interest of the deprived and the marginalised, the sacrifices of the martyrs will have been in vain. In this context, the parliament's announcement to deal with the chronic issue of citizenship is a positive step. Even to savour freedom, a sustainable peace is required. Legal eagles are, however, cautioning the leaders against the probable designs of the anti-democratic forces. The dissenting views cannot be brushed aside but care should be taken to plug the legal lacunae, if any. As the election to the Constituent Assembly will decide Nepal's future, the constitution in the making should bring in its wake guarantees of the basic rights of all the stakeholders. Bad politics have stunted the nation's growth. The country needs visionary leaders who can look beyond parochial and sectarian interests. People expect from the seven-party alliance and the Maoists to channelise their energies in the consolidation of the gains of the *Jana Andolan*. No matter what system of governance Nepal embraces eventually, it cannot make an iota of difference if the political system continues to rot. Let's not, then, create cause for the history to repeat itself.

25-Point Code of Conduct: *TKP* (29 May 2006)

## Code of conduct

The 25-point code of conduct signed between the government and the Maoists is encouraging. It has ignited a fresh breath of optimism. It agreed to monitor and govern the truce and to create a conducive environment for peace dialogue, which has been welcomed by the civil society and the general people. The people are feeling relieved, thinking that they no more have to put up with awful violence. This agreement is significant because it is taking place between the forces established by the people's movement. Both the parties in the government and the Maoist rebels have reached this point with mutual understanding and trust. What is more relieving than anything else is that neither is considering the other as its arch rival. The hammering out of the code of conduct within a few hours also signifies the harmony and trust developed between them. However, this piece of document is just the beginning. Both the parties and the country as a whole should be quite careful to avoid any hitches that might come on the way to work out a lasting peace and stability.

While turning euphoric about the present, the bitter past should not be pushed to backburner. This is not the first time the Maoists have declared a ceasefire and agreed to a peace talk. In the past, every talk and ceasefire proved as a tactical stunt to reinforce their power and influence for the rebels. Of course, the situation is quite different this time, but proper care has to be taken until an election to constituent assembly is held. We should take things seriously because even after three days of the implementation of the code of conduct, abductions, killings and extortion have not ceased completely. The Maoist cadres still claim certain areas to be under their rule, and extort money on the pretext of donations.

The basic dissenting agenda in the previous peace talks used to be the election to the constituent assembly (CA). However, it is now the goal of both the Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists. So, as there is no confusion about this, the only issue that remains to be settle is how to go about it. The issue of proper handling of the military and management of the Maoist arms is quite crucial but quite tricky. Similarly, the mainstreaming and the integration of Maoist cadres and ensuring their source of livelihood are also important. The country as a whole is expecting a lasting peace. Let us hope the SPA and the Maoists do not let the people down.

25-Point Code of Conduct: *THT* (26 May 2006)

## The Gokarna code

Though the long-awaited first round of dialogue between the government and the Maoists on Friday was able to hammer out a 25-point Ceasefire Code of Conduct to pave the way for holding the elections to the constituent assembly, utmost care should now be taken to implement the valuable document in right earnest. Home Minister Krishna Sitaula and Krishna Bahadur Mahara, heading the three-member Maoist team, signed the code in accordance with the spirit of the 12-point agreement signed in November last year. Now that a base for moving unhindered the peace process forward has been established, both the parties should focus on working tenaciously within the parameters dictated by the code, so that the second and the more productive round — which is expected to be held within two to three days — would be additionally meaningful.

This is no time to strive for brownie points or embarrass each other over non-issues. Let's consider one of the points in the code of conduct that debars Maoist militia in uniform from participating in any political gathering. Disappointingly, the very next day of the signing of the code, Maoist leader Mahara's address to a mass meeting in Janakpur saw the presence of a significant number of khukuri-wielding rebel cadres in battle fatigues. Wasn't this, then, a violation of the ceasefire code of conduct? Mahara has also called for a national convention to draft an interim constitution along with the dissolution of the House (which has been ruled out until an elected body is formed), and the formation of an interim government so that the Maoists too could be inducted in the government. Forging ahead through consensus alone will help in concentrating on the modalities of holding the elections to the constituent assembly and amicably sinking the differences because the party leaders themselves and the public are not cock-sure about the actual level and quality of trust between them and the Maoists.

Now that a code has been agreed upon though violated in somewhat equal measure, the question of its monitoring by a reliable international agency has become imperative. Both the parties have to keep their words. Minister of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, who is also a member of the government's talk team, has already indicated that the next round of talks would see a request going to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights-Nepal to monitor the implementation of the code of conduct. This, along with the inking of a Human Rights pact that is being discussed, are indeed positive signals as they can serve as a deterrent to violations of their own commitments. Hopefully, a host of subversive activities such as extortions, lootings, kidnappings and, above all, killings will become a thing of the past. The leaders who refuse to respect the people's wish cannot claim to be democratic in the true sense of the term. They can lose the people's trust as quickly as they have regained it.

## APPENDIX II

### SPA-Maoist Agreements

#### The Twelve-Point Agreement (22 Nov. 2005)

The long struggle between absolute monarchy and democracy in Nepal has now reached a very grave and new turn. Establishing peace by resolving the 10-year old armed conflict through a forward-looking political outlet has become the need of today. Therefore, implementing the concept of absolute democracy through a forward-looking restructuring of the state has become an inevitable need to solve the problems related to class, caste, gender, region etc. of all sectors including political, economic, social and cultural, bringing autocratic monarchy to an end and establishing absolute democracy. We make public that, against this existing backdrop and reference in the country, the following understanding has been reached between the seven parliamentary parties and the CPN (Maoist) through different methods of talks.

#### Points of Understanding:

1. Today, democracy, peace, prosperity, social advancement and a free and sovereign Nepal is the chief wish of all Nepalese. We completely agree that autocratic monarchy is the main hurdle in (realising) this. It is our clear view that without establishing absolute democracy by ending autocratic monarchy, there is no possibility of peace, progress and prosperity in the country. Therefore, an understanding has been reached to establish absolute democracy by ending autocratic monarchy, with all forces against the autocratic monarchy centralizing their assault against autocratic monarchy from their respective positions, thereby creating a nationwide storm of democratic protests.
2. The seven agitating parties are fully committed to the fact that only by establishing absolute democracy through the restoration of the Parliament with the force of agitation, forming an all-party government with complete authority, holding elections to a constituent assembly through dialogue and understanding with the Maoists, can the existing conflict in the country be resolved and sovereignty and state power completely transferred to the people. It is the view and commitment of the CPN (Maoist) that the above mentioned goal can be achieved by holding a national political conference of the agitating democratic forces, and through its decision, forming an interim government to hold constituent assembly elections. An understanding has been reached between the agitating seven parties and the CPN (Maoist) to continue dialogue on this procedural work-list and find a common understanding. It has been agreed that the force of people's movement is the only alternative to achieve this.
3. Today, the country has demanded the establishment of permanent peace along with a positive solution to the armed conflict. Therefore, we are committed to ending autocratic monarchy and the existing armed conflict, and establishing permanent peace in the country through constituent assembly elections and forward-looking political outlet. The CPN (Maoist) expresses its commitment to move along the new peaceful political stream through this process. In this very context, an understanding has been reached to keep, during the holding of constituent assembly elections after ending autocratic monarchy, the armed Maoist force and the royal army under the supervision of the United Nations or any other reliable international supervision, to conclude the elections in a free and fair manner and accept the result of the elections. We expect reliable international mediation even during the dialogue process.
4. Expressing clearly and making public institutional commitment to the democratic norms and values like the competitive multiparty system of governance, civil liberties, human rights, the concept of the rule of law, fundamental rights etc, the



CPN (Maoist) has expressed commitment to move forward its activities accordingly.

5. The CPN (Maoist) has expressed its commitment to create an environment allowing the political activists of other democratic parties displaced during the course of the armed conflict to return to their former localities and live there with dignity, return their home, land and property seized in an unjust manner and carry out their activities without let or hindrance.
6. Undertaking self-criticism and self evaluation of past mistakes, the CPN (Maoist) has expressed commitment not to repeat such mistakes in future.
7. The seven political parties, undertaking self-evaluation, have expressed commitment not to repeat the mistakes of the past which were committed while in parliament and in government.
8. In the context of moving the peace process forward, commitment has been expressed to fully respect the norms and values of human rights and press freedom and move ahead accordingly.
9. As the announcement of municipal polls pushed forward with the ill-motive of deluding the people and the international community and giving continuity to the autocratic and illegitimate rule of the King, and the talk of elections to Parliament are a crafty ploy, we announce to actively boycott them and call upon the general public to make such elections a failure.
10. The people and their representative political parties are the real guardians of nationality. Therefore, we are firmly committed to protecting the independence, sovereignty, geographical integrity of the country and national unity. Based on the principle of peaceful co-existence, it is our common obligation to maintain friendly relations with all countries of the world and good-neighbour relationship with neighbouring countries, especially India and China. But we request the patriotic masses to be cautious against the false attempt by the King and (his) loyalists to prolong his autocratic and illegitimate rule and delude the patriotic people by projecting the illusory "Mandale" nationalism and questioning the patriotism of the political parties, and appeal to the international powers and the people to support, in every possible way, the democratic movement against autocratic monarchy in Nepal.
11. We call upon the civil society, professional organizations, various wings of parties, people of all communities and regions, press and intellectuals to actively participate in the peaceful movement launched on the basis of these understandings centered on democracy, peace, prosperity, forward-looking social change and the country's independence, sovereignty, and pride.
12. Regarding the inappropriate conducts that took place between the parties in the past, a common commitment has been expressed to investigate any objection raised by any party over such incidents, take action if found guilty, and to make the action public. An understanding has been reached to settle any problem emerging between the parties through peaceful dialogue at the concerned level or at the leadership level.

Source: "Letter of Understanding between the Seven-Party Alliance and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)." Appendix B. *Nepal's New Alliance: The Mainstream Parties and the Maoists*. International Crisis Group. Asia Report N°106, 28 Nov. 2005. 29-30.

#### Second SPA-Maoist Understanding (19 Mar. 2006)

It is widely known that the seven political parties, who are agitating for ending autocratic monarchy to establish complete democracy, and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) reached the historic Twelve-Point Agreement on 22 November 2005 for democracy, peace, prosperity, development and national sovereignty. There is no doubt that the Agreement has been endorsed by the general people, as reflected in the fact that the February 8 municipal polls staged by the autocratic regime met a complete failure due to the force of the nation-



wide movement and its consequences. The wide support the international community has expressed clarifies that the Agreement is the only foundation for the resolution of ongoing crisis. In this context, we repeat our firm commitment to implement the Agreement in all respects.

Here, we want to remind all again that the seven political parties are fully committed to the fact that the ongoing conflict can be resolved and sovereignty and state power can be bestowed on the people through the roadmap which includes restoring the House of Representative by a force of mass movement, forming an all-powerful multi-party government with the decision of the parliament, holding negotiations with the CPN-Maoist and conducting the constituent assembly elections through consensus. The CPN-Maoist is firm in its commitment to achieving the same goals through an election of constituent assembly conducted by an interim government which is formed after a national political conference of the principal political forces. The seven political parties and the CPN-Maoist agree to continue talks to seek consensus on these procedural matters. Foremost, they agree that mass movement is the only alternative to achieving the aforesaid goals. We extend our sincere appeals to all the democratic forces, civil society, professional groups, party wings, people of the marginalized ethnicities and regions, media workers and the general people to participate in the ongoing peaceful protest programs so as to establish complete democracy by placing country's sovereignty and state power on people through the election of constituent assembly.

We also appeal to the international community to extend all kinds of cooperation to the political parties' initiative to restore peace by establishing complete democracy through the abolition of the autocratic monarchy and resolution of the ten-year old armed conflict.

[Unofficial translation]

#### Twenty-Five Point Ceasefire Code of Conduct (25 May 2006)

##### *Preamble*

Respecting the popular mandate expressed through the historic People's Movement for total democracy, progress and peace; Remaining committed towards the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, and fundamental principles and values of international humanitarian law and human rights; Remaining committed to fulfill the Twelve-Point Agreement between the seven political parties and the Maoists; Remaining committed towards democratic values including the concept of competitive multiparty democracy, civic liberties, fundamental rights, press freedom and the rule of law; Guaranteeing the fundamental rights of the Nepali people to participate in the process of Constitution-making through election to the Constituent Assembly without any fear, threat and violence; Placing democracy, peace, prosperity, forward-looking social transformation and freedom, sovereignty and dignity of the nation in the centre; and In order to transform the ceasefire between the Government of Nepal and the CPN (Maoist) into permanent peace and resolve the problems through negotiations, a code of conduct has been issued as follows as per the wishes of the Nepali people.

Guaranteeing fearless civilian life:

1. Not to issue any statement or engage in any activities which could provoke each other.
2. Both the parties shall not mobilize, display or use their armed forces in a manner that could spread fear and terror amongst the people.
3. Not to attack or destroy each other's military or security installations, not to lay down mines or ambushes, not to recruit new people in one's military and not to spy against each other.
4. Both sides will extend mutual cooperation in order to maintain peace and security.

5. Discussion and understanding will be made as per need regarding the issue of management of arms and armed personnel.

Creating an environment of trust among the people:

6. Both the parties will not participate in public meetings, conference or any other political activities in combat dresses or along with arms.
7. No hindrance will be made from either side for political activists and members of social organizations to move around the country and express their views, organize meetings or engage in their organizational works. They will not be subject to any mental or physical pressure.

On basic services to the people and development activities:

8. During the period of ceasefire, activities like 'bandh' (general strike) and 'chakka jam' (transport strike) will not be organized, but peaceful demonstrations may be organized.
9. Essential services and facilities to the people will be allowed to operate without disruption.
10. Not to create hurdles in undertaking regular development works peacefully and other works aimed at people's benefit.
11. Transportation of items like food, medicines, materials used in development works and daily utility items will not be obstructed or banned.
12. Both the parties will create an environment for the smooth functioning of schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, health centres and industrial institutions.

Cooperation from media for peace talks:

13. Use civilized and dignified language while disseminating information about ceasefire, code of conduct and the peace process and other political activities.
14. Nobody should issue statements through media in a manner which could hamper the talks and peace process.

Not to collect donation and other financial assistance forcefully:

15. Donation or financial assistance in cash, kind or in the form of services will not be collected or mobilized against one's will.

Release and rehabilitation:

16. Accusation, claims or cases filed by both the parties against various individuals will be withdrawn and the detainees will be released gradually.
17. Whereabouts of the people who have been disappeared will be publicized immediately.
18. To help in the rehabilitation of and extend cooperation to displaced people to return to their respective houses in a peaceful, comfortable and respectable manner.
19. Return the properties of the leaders of political parties, activists and civilians, which were seized, locked up or prohibited from being used during the period of the conflict, to concerned persons or their families. Problems arising while returning the properties will be resolved through mutual agreement.

Facilitating the talks:

20. No hurdles will be created in the movement and activities of individuals involved in negotiations from both the parties.

Monitoring:

21. On the basis of mutual agreement between the two parties, national and international monitoring teams will be asked to monitor the ceasefire.

Miscellaneous:

22. Dispute, if any, in terms of interpretation of this code of conduct, will be resolved on the basis of agreement between the parties.
23. In accordance with the spirit of the preamble of this code, amendments could be made in the code of conduct through mutual agreement.
24. To enforce this code of conduct immediately after it is signed
25. To make the code of conduct public immediately after it is signed.

(Source: Manjushree Thapa, *The Lives We Have Lost*)

## APPENDIX III

### Post-Movement Proclamations

#### Resolution of the First Meeting of the House of Representatives (28 Apr. 2006)

“Respecting the popular aspirations expressed in the peaceful joint movement; being based on the twelve-point understanding between the seven-party alliance and Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), and the seven parties’ roadmap in the movement; to institutionalize the fact that Nepalis are the sole source of state power and Nepal’s sovereignty and state power rests on them; and to resolve through drafting a new constitution the serious crises facing the country at present, this meeting of the House of Representatives passes the resolution to move towards the election of constituent assembly. To this direction, the House also expresses commitment to hold talks with the CPN-Maoist at the earliest, to declare ceasefire, and to ensure the atmosphere of freedom from fear, terror and violence.”

[Unofficial Translation]

#### House Proclamation (17 May 2006)

In respect of the sacrifices and participation made by the Nepalese people in the peaceful joint movement,

In due attention to the fact that the people had shown keen interest through the peaceful joint people’s movement that took place some time back, on establishing that people are the sole source of state power of the independent and sovereign Nepal, as the people are the sole source of the state power and sovereignty,

With determination to fulfilling the people’s mandate given by the Nepali people as per the roadmap of the seven political parties and the CPN-Maoist in the peaceful joint people’s movement to restore an inclusive state by restructuring the state by formulating new constitution and to restore sustainable peace through democracy, and constituent assembly,

Internalizing the greater responsibility of the sovereign Nepali people for strengthening the country’s national integrity, indivisibility and national unity,

As the fact that the House of Representatives (HoR) established on the support of the people’s movement is sovereign and fully authorized has been realized in the king’s declarations on April 24, 2006 that the Nepali people are the sole source of state power and Nepal’s state sovereignty and state power rests on the Nepali people and the people’s aspirations exhibited in the present people’s movement, and on the basis of the roadmap of the seven political parties for resolving the violent conflict continuing in the country,

Makes the following declaration through this House of Representatives that this House of Representatives is sovereign for the exercise of all the rights until another constitutional arrangement is made to take the responsibility to gear ahead in the direction of full-fledged democracy and make an end to the autocratic monarchy by institutionalizing the achievements of the present people’s movement, while safeguarding the achievements of the 1990 people’s movement:

## 1. ON LEGISLATIVE

- 1.1. All the rights regarding the legislative body of Nepal shall be exercised through the House of Representatives. The procedures for formulating laws shall be as specified by the House of Representatives.
- 1.2. The procedures for moving on the path of Constituent Assembly shall be as fixed by the House of Representatives.
- 1.3. Calling of the session of the House of Representatives and its conclusion shall be as follows:
  - a. The calling of the session shall be by the prime minister and will be concluded by the speaker on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.
  - b. The Speaker shall fix the date for the session or meeting to hold within 15 days if request is made before the speaker by one fourth of the total members at the moment in the House of Representatives citing that it is appropriate to call a session or a meeting when the House of Representative is not being held or if the meeting is stalled.
- 1.4. The House of Representatives shall formulate and implement the House of Representatives regulations.

## 2. ON EXECUTIVE

- 2.1. All the executive rights of Nepal as a state shall rest on the Council Ministers. 'His Majesty's Government' shall be termed 'Government of Nepal' from now onwards.
- 2.2. Persons who are not the members of the House of Representatives can also be nominated in the Council of Ministers.
- 2.3. The Council of Ministers shall be responsible towards the House of Representatives. The Council of Ministers and the ministers collectively and for the works of their ministries shall be personally responsible towards the House of Representatives. The administration, army, police and all the executive organs shall be under the purview of the government that is responsible towards the House of Representatives.
- 2.4. The allocation and transaction of business of the government shall be presented at the House of Representatives after its passage from the Council of Ministers.

## 3. ON ARMY

- 3.1. The name "Royal Nepal Army" shall be changed to "Nepalese Army."
- 3.2. The Existing provision regarding the National Security Council has been repealed. There shall be a National Security Council under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister in order to control, use and mobilize the Nepalese Army.
- 3.3. The Chief of the Army Staff of the Nepalese Army shall be appointed by the Council of Ministers.
- 3.4. The existing arrangement of Supreme Commander of the Army has been revoked.
- 3.5. The decision of the Council of Ministers on mobilizing the Nepalese Army must be tabled and endorsed within 30 days from the special committee assigned by the House of Representatives.
- 3.6. The formation of the Nepalese Army shall be inclusive and national in nature.

## 4. ON RAJ PARISHAD

The existing provision of Raj Parishad has been revoked. Necessary works being performed by the Raj Parishad shall be as per the arrangement made by the House of Representatives.

## 5. ON ROYAL PALACE

- 5.1. The right to make laws, amend and nullify regarding the succession to throne shall rest on the House of Representatives.
- 5.2. Expenditure and facilities for His Majesty the King shall be as per the decision of the House of Representatives.
- 5.3. The private property and income of His Majesty the King shall be taxed as per the law.
- 5.4. Acts performed by His Majesty the King are questionable in the House of Representatives or in court.
- 5.5. Existing Royal Palace Service shall be made part of the civil service.
- 5.6. The security arrangement for the Royal Palace shall be as per the arrangement made by the Council of Ministers.
6. The existing problem regarding citizenship shall be instantly resolved.
7. The existing "national anthem" shall be changed by making alternative arrangement.
8. Nepal shall be a secular state.

## 9. MISCELLANEOUS

- i) All the state organs and bodies shall exercise their rights as having been authorized by this House of Representatives and with full faith towards it.
- ii) Specified officials holding public posts shall take oath of office from the House of Representatives in specified manner. Officials who ignore receiving oath of office shall be relieved of their posts.
- iii) The inconsistent legal arrangements of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal-1990 and other prevailing laws, with this declaration, shall be nullified to the extent of inconsistency.
- iv) Any difficulty that may come while implementing this declaration shall be removed by a decision of the House of Representatives.
- v) A committee shall be there in the House of Representatives for the purpose of implementation of sub-clause (c) and (d) above.

[Unofficial Translation]

[Source: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/nepal/document/papers/>]

## APPENDIX IV

### Royal Addresses

#### The Takeover Speech (1 Feb. 2005)

Beloved Countrymen,

1. The Kingdom of Nepal was built on the foundations of the unification process initiated by King Prithvi Narayan Shah the Great. It is well known that to reign in accordance with the people's aspirations, our forefathers initiated revolutionary measures of historic importance, ensuring a bright future of the nation and her people. History is witness to the fact that both the Nepalese people and the King have, in unison, played decisive roles in each and every period of the Kingdom's process of unification, democratisation and modernisation.
2. Today, we have once again reached a juncture where, in keeping with popular aspirations, a historic decision must be taken to defend multiparty democracy by restoring peace for the nation and people. Even when bloodshed, violence and devastation has pushed the country on the brink of destruction, those engaged in politics in the name of the country and people continue to shut their eyes to their welfare. Tussle for power, abuse of authority on gaining power and unhealthy competition in fulfilling personal and communal interests at the expense of the nation and citizenry contributed to the further deterioration in the situation. There were attempts to flout the universally accepted rule of law in the name of politics. Our desire to ensure social, political and economic justice for our beloved people through the meaningful exercise of multiparty democracy could not be materialised. There was a steady rise in crimes against the nation and people, including destruction of development infrastructures constructed for the people's benefit. Whereas all democratic forces should have adopted a unified approach against terrorism, leaders instead continued their tussle for power, encouraging simple political workers to vandalise public utilities in the name of politics. Faced with this steadily declining situation, it is now time to bring to an end the ongoing acts of terrorist violence and pledge, in earnest, to fulfill the people's aspirations with the restoration of peace and security in the country.

Beloved countrymen,

3. Democracy and progress always complement each other. But, Nepal's bitter experiences over the past few years tend to show that democracy and progress contradict one another. Multiparty democracy was discredited by focusing solely on power politics. Parliament witnessed many aberrations in the name of retaining and ousting governments. Not a single House of Representatives was allowed to complete its tenure. Continuous confusion and disorder resulted in the obstruction of the democratic process. While the people's aspirations continued to be shattered and their trust trampled on, they became increasingly disenchanted with democracy itself. After being incapable of holding elections, there were conspiracies to form undemocratic governments, which would be responsible to no one. There was also a written consensus amongst all political parties on vacuuming the people's representatives out but they could not see eye to eye when it came to working together in filling this void. The participation and concurrence of political parties in making way for a form of governance, which negated popular representation, was against the people's wishes and norms and spirit of multiparty democracy. So, we appealed to all those who have faith in democracy with the intention of activating, at the earliest, the system of popular representation. We also met a number of times with members of the general public, senior citizens, representatives of the civil society and leaders of political parties in our effort to gauge the popular mandate and try to convince them of the country's requirements and people's aspirations. We reminded them that the only wish of the Nepalese people and friends of Nepal was to bring to an end the ongoing violence and destructive activities and return peace and tranquility to the country without any further delay. In order to conduct the general elections in an environment of peace and security, opportunities were given to leaders of various political parties to constitute the

Council of Ministers, with executive power. But the situation did not improve. National politics was plagued by not uniting in running the government but opposing it on being ousted from it. No serious efforts were made to attenuate the real threat posed against democracy by terrorism in the form of a single-party autocracy. The habit of passing carefree remarks on matters of national security continued. Political parties were unable to display responsible behaviour in augmenting the patriotic fervour of our dutiful security personnel, who are active round the clock in ensuring security of the nation and people. Multiparty democrats could not sincerely unite, with national interest as the focal point, to forever end the cycle of devastation being lashed out against the nation and people. Likewise, political parties also could not identify national priorities in keeping with the people's aspirations.

4. Throughout history, the Nepalese people never had to bear the burden of such terrorism, agony and exploitation. No democracy has ever had to go through such a dismal situation, where the innocent are punished by criminals, people whose property is seized and innocent children, women and the elderly who are mercilessly killed by criminals cannot receive any kind of protection from those who govern in their name and parties who claim to represent the people do not act in their defence. The nefarious designs of an individual or group, negating the wishes of the Nepalese people as well as the national interest and acting through sponsored mobs, cannot form our national agenda. Conscientiousness towards our responsibility to the future of the country and people has nudged us many a time. Circumstances have reached such a critical stage that it has now become imperative for us to take a decision in the greater interest of the nation and people in accordance with their aspirations.

Beloved Countrymen,

5. Nepal's independence, national unity and sovereignty are best safeguarded by the intimate relationship between the King and people. An Institution of Monarchy ever devoted to the country and people and a people with an innate love for their land is the glorious history of the Kingdom of Nepal, its present and also its future. In keeping with this glorious tradition, popular will as always remained the guiding light for Nepal's Monarchy. We are committed to social justice; totalitarianism and authoritarianism are entirely inconsistent with the Monarchical traditions of the Shah Dynasty. We are convinced of the fact that the Nepalese people have deep faith in and are firmly committed to Constitutional Monarchy and multiparty democracy. We believe that centralisation of authority is against democratic norms. We feel that a meaningful exercise in democracy can take place only when elected representatives at all levels are given their share in the governance of the country in accordance with the principles of separation of powers. It is our desire that, while no Nepalese should experience pain or suffering, every citizen should have unfettered access to social, economic and political justice. We strongly believe that the people should always feel that their wishes are being fully honoured and their interests completely protected in the governance of the country. It is our desire to ensure that the Kingdom of Nepal forges ahead towards the creation of a mature democracy and welfare society with the collective judgment, understanding and farsightedness of all patriotic democrats. We are confident that there can never be any differences among democrats on achieving the fundamental objectives of national welfare.
6. We have no interest other than the restoration of sustainable peace and exercise in meaningful democracy for the welfare of Nepal and Nepalese people. Monarchy is guided not by a cheap popularity but by the overall welfare and continued progress of Nepal and her people. Everyone should respect the people's desire for effective reforms. Let no Nepalese feel compelled to take up arms as a means of expressing frustration or disenchantment. At the same time, it must be ensured that every citizen has the opportunity to express discontent effectively without jeopardizing social harmony. It is clear that what the people want are a meaningful exercise in democracy, an effective market economy, good governance, transparency and a corruption-free rule of law. Our only wish is to guarantee our people's happiness through democracy, instill hope among



the youth for a brighter future and to ensure dignity for Nepal amongst the comity of nations. Equal opportunities for the development of all our languages, peoples and their cultures alone can preserve and consolidate the Kingdom's distinct characteristics.

7. Contrary to the wishes of the Nepalese people, on whom sovereignty is vested, no serious efforts were made towards initiating elections to the House of Representatives within the year 2061 B.S. by maintaining, to the extent possible, peace and security. Instead of preparing the electorate and political parties for the elections and laying the necessary legal, managerial and technical groundwork, time was wasted on paying only lip service on the urgency of holding elections. As it is our responsibility to preserve our nationalism, national unity and sovereignty, as well as to maintain peace and security in the country and ensure that the state of the nation does not deteriorate any further, we have, by virtue of the State Authority as exercised by us and in keeping with the spirit of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal – 1990, taking into consideration Article 27 (3) of the Constitution, dissolved, effective from today, the current Council of Ministers to fulfill the people's desire for the restoration of peace and security and to activate soon the democratic dispensation. The Council of Ministers to be constituted will be under our Chairmanship. This Council of Ministers will give utmost priority to reactivating multiparty democracy in the country within three years with the implementation of effective reforms by restoring peace and security.

Beloved countrymen,

8. Only a meaningful multiparty democracy can be an effective means of governance by the people. A successful multiparty democracy alone is synonymous with people's democracy. Such a system, which is people-oriented, mature, cultured and refined, has been disrupted. Terrorising the innocent population, extorting money through intimidation, brutally murdering those who dissent, kidnapping students and perpetrating atrocities against teachers, making false promises to simple people and destroying development projects aimed at the people's welfare are crimes against the nation and people, which have to be brought to an immediate end. From now on, such crimes will be dealt with firmly in accordance with the law. Our security forces have been mobilised to carry out their responsibilities more effectively to end terrorism and restore peace and security in the interest of the nation and people. All the organs of the state must remain alert in honouring and upholding human rights. However, it will be unfair to put the state and terrorists on equal footing. We are confident that all peace-loving Nepalese who have faith in democracy will, as always, continue to cooperate with the security forces in maintaining peace and tranquility.
9. We call upon all those who have gone astray, taking up arms against the nation and people, and those who are engaged in criminal activities against peace and democracy to return to the mainstream of national politics peacefully. Ensuring opportunities to freely express one's views with patriotism as the focal point, fulfilling one's aspirations and contributing to the welfare of the nation and people are the inherent features of multiparty democracy. We assure all those who avail of this opportunity to join the national mainstream that the state will give them opportunities and rights equal to those enjoyed by all our citizens, without any discrimination whatsoever; neither the people nor the law will tolerate any terrorist activities against the state or its citizens.

Beloved countrymen,

10. We would like to thank all the friendly nations who have generously supported us, appreciating our commitment to fight terrorism, as well as donors and international financial institutions that have rendered invaluable assistance in our development endeavours. Even the world's democracies are presently faced with the threat of terrorism, which cannot be confined within geographical boundaries. The world community has in fact realised that the more secure, stable and prosperous the smaller nations become, the more secure, stable and prosperous will the region and the world as a whole be. Nepal is, therefore, committed to eliminating terrorism in her own interest as well as in the interest

- of democracies around the world. Nepal aspires for peace - for herself, her neighbours and South Asia - and to rid the world of the threat to peace.
11. While expressing our unflinching faith in multiparty democracy, we would like to mention that economic and institutional reforms will continue. Efforts at reforms in the utilisation of public expenditure and public service delivery will be made more effective. Banking discipline will be restored. Measures will be adopted towards the effective implementation of the poverty -reduction strategy and the anti-corruption drive. Sustainable development is now our national agenda. No one will be allowed to jeopardise the people's security and the future of democracy. Nepal will not allow terrorists to use her territory against herself or against any other friendly nation. In our ties with other countries, emphasis will be laid on fostering constructive relations based on mutual benefit and pragmatism.
  12. Corruption, which has been continuously spreading its tentacles, has not only cast a shadow over politics and administration, but has also obstructed the nation's march towards progress. Corruption has struck at the very core of our society, the result of which the common man's confidence in the laws of the land has been shaken. Therefore, in keeping with the popular will and to fulfil the main criterion of good governance, effective measures will be adopted to curb corruption, while ensuring that the principles of justice are not infringed upon.
  13. It is our desire that democracy be a way of life, politics be conducted in keeping with democratic norms and values, people from all strata of society honestly adhere to democratic ideals and everyone be guided by the interest of the country and people. All Nepalese wish to see our country as a progressive nation, occupying a pride of place in the international community, where democratic ideals thrive in a peaceful environment. It is our belief that upholding human rights not only preserves and promotes democratic values but also enhances a way of life and civilisational values commensurate with the 21st century.

Beloved countrymen,

14. Our decision should leave no room for confusion amongst the security personnel and civil servants in discharge of their duties and responsibilities. Today, it is we Nepalese who must take an initiative to ensure a bright future for Nepal and the Nepalese. An independent press serves as the medium for raising the level of democratic consciousness. It plays a crucial role in the promotion of national interests. We believe that the press will make effective contributions in ensuring that democratic norms and values inspire our way of life as well as governance. We are confident that, with this in mind, all those who have faith in multiparty democracy will discharge their duties from their respective places and the people's aspirations along with the country's requirements will be realised through the shared efforts of all the countrymen.
15. Today, the nation has made a firm commitment and a decision has also been taken accordingly. The nation has taken a step forward towards democracy and progress, leaving behind violence, insecurity and conflict. At a time when the country is in the grip of terrorism, all those who believe in democracy and peace must unite. Let us, therefore, be inspired by our collective wisdom and guided by our national perspective. Any nefarious attempts at disturbing peace and security and hindering efforts at making democracy meaningful will not be tolerated either by the nation or people. Yet, in pursuit of liberalism, we should never overlook an important aspect of our conduct, namely discipline. This is also the thinking of the 21st century. We wish to repeat once again that those who cannot do justice to Nepal, those who cannot believe in the sound judgment of the people and those who cannot stand in favor of peace will stand condemned by the motherland. May Lord Pashupatinath bless us all! Jaya Nepal!

(Unofficial Translation)

[Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal]

<http://mofa.gov.np/uploads/files/news/20060313115845.pdf>

Call to Parties for Government Formation (21 April 2006)

Beloved Countrymen,

You are all aware that, given the situation prevailing in the country then, we were compelled to take the decision of 1 February 2005 to set in motion a meaningful exercise in multiparty democracy by activating all elected bodies, ensuring peace and security and a corruption-free good governance through the collective wisdom, understanding and the united efforts of all the Nepalese. By supporting our decision, the Nepalese people made amply clear their desire for peace and democracy and the civil servants demonstrated sincerity towards their duties. We are appreciative of this. We also have high regard for the dutifulness, valour and discipline displayed by the security personnel, upholding their glorious traditions.

By visiting different parts of the country, we made honest endeavours to acquaint ourselves with the hopes and aspirations of our people, mitigate their hardships and boost their morale. We also called on the political parties to enter into a dialogue in the interest of the nation and people afflicted by violence and terrorism. However, this did not materialise. The ideals of democracy can be realised only through the active participation of political parties. In keeping with the traditions of the Shah Dynasty to reign in accordance with the popular will in the greater interest of the nation and people and our unflinching commitment towards Constitutional Monarchy and multiparty democracy, we, through this Proclamation, affirm that the Executive Power of the Kingdom of Nepal, which was in our safekeeping, shall, from this day, be returned to the people and be exercised in accordance with Article 35 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal - 1990. As the source of Sovereign Authority is inherent in the people, harmony and understanding must be preserved in the interest of the nation and people in an environment of peace and security. While safeguarding multiparty democracy, the nation must be taken ahead along the road of peace and prosperity by bringing into the democratic mainstream those who have deviated from the constitutional path. Similarly, a meaningful exercise in democracy must be ensured with the activation of representative bodies through elections as soon as possible. We, therefore, call upon the Seven Party Alliance to recommend a name, for the post of Prime Minister, at the earliest for the constitution of the Council of Ministers which will bear the responsibility of governing the country in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal - 1990. The present Council of Ministers will continue to function until the appointment of the Prime Minister.

May Lord Pashupatinath bless us all!

Jaya Nepal!

Source: "Full Text of the Royal Proclamation, April 21, 2006." *Jana Andolan II: A Witness Account*. Ed. Kundan Aryal and Upendra Paudel. Kathmandu: INSEC, 2006. 16.

Restoration of the House of Representatives (24 Apr. 2006)

Beloved Countrymen,

Convinced that the source of state authority and sovereignty of the kingdom of Nepal is inherent in the people of Nepal and cognizant of the spirit of the ongoing people's movement as well as to resolve the ongoing violent conflict and other problems facing the country according to the road map of the agitating seven-party alliance, we, through this proclamation, reinstate the House of Representatives which was dissolved on 22 May 2002 on

the advice of the then prime minister in accordance with the constitution of the kingdom of Nepal-1990.

We call upon the seven-party alliance to bear the responsibility of taking the nation on the path to national unity and prosperity, while ensuring permanent peace and safeguarding multiparty democracy.

We also summon the session of the reinstated House of Representatives at the Sansad Bhawan, Singha Durbar at 1300 (0745GMT) on Friday 28 April 2006.

We are confident that this House will contribute to the overall welfare of Nepal and the Nepalese people.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to all those who have lost their lives in the people's movement and wish the injured speedy recovery. We are confident that the nation will forge ahead towards sustainable peace, progress, full-fledged democracy and national unity.

May Lord Pashupatinath bless us all!

Jaya Nepal!

Source: "Full Text of the Royal Proclamation, April 24, 2006." *Jana Andolan II: A Witness Account*. Ed. Kundan Aryal and Upendra Paudel. Kathmandu: INSEC, 2006. 18.